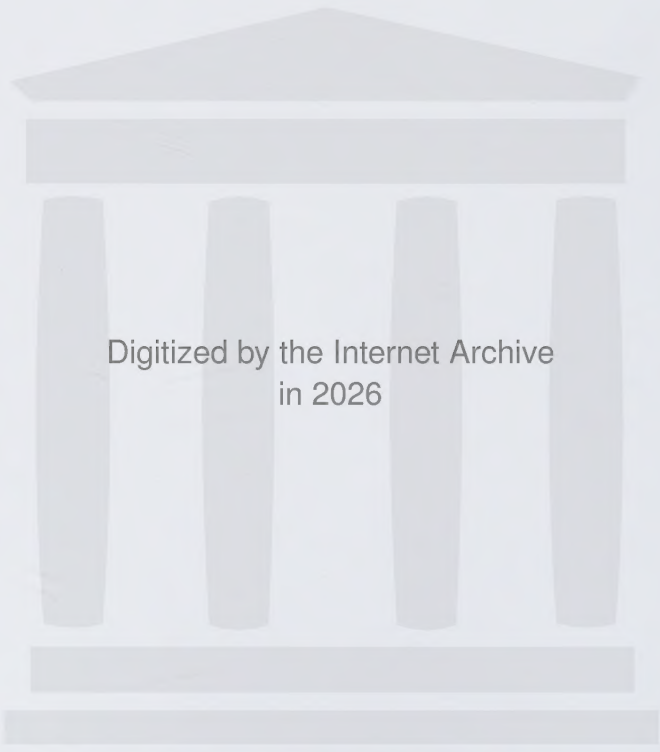

*The Memoir of
Lydia Bagdikian*

A Childhood in Two Countries



Edited by Ben H. Bagdikian



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Lydia Bagdikian*



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Editor's Note

It was more than 30 years ago that I first became aware that my sister Lydia had written a memoir about her childhood. I saw it briefly—much too briefly—but I knew then that it was an unusual document about an Armenian childhood experience in Turkey and then in the United States as a young immigrant.

Her intentions for the work were not explicitly clear to me then, but it was clear that at the very least she wanted it for the benefit of members of the family and probably more.

When Lydia died in Wakefield, Massachusetts in 1993, as her executor I found among her effects the collected pages of her memoir. The memoir consisted of 417 typed pages in two loose-leaf binders. A meticulous typist, she clearly had written it in her apartment in whatever time she could spare while holding a responsible and demanding position in the office of the Superintendent of Schools of Stoneham, Massachusetts. Most of the pages were typed double-spaced on one side of the paper, but some were single-spaced on both sides, and many had lines and phrases added in pencil, hinting of her need to make changes hurriedly in brief moments of free time. In the margins of some pages are red-pencilled notes in Gregg shorthand, in which she was skilled. Not knowing Gregg or her intentions for them, I have made no attempt to translate the Gregg notations in this reproduction of her memoir.

The memoir printed here is as Lydia wrote it. I have made no changes with the exception of minor transpositions of words clearly typed by her in haste. I have also inserted occasional editorial clarifications of context in order to make a reference by Lydia more

clear for younger generations who may be unfamiliar with the particular history of the time and circumstances. I have added some chapter breaks and titles. My added insertions are as brief and infrequent as possible and always enclosed in brackets to separate them from Lydia's own words.

Lydia's memoir is a special document—extraordinarily vivid, detailed, at times charming and at times terrifying, at others, tragic. All of it creates a record of what it meant for a young girl living in a comfortable Armenian family in the midst of the Turkish genocide of Armenians (a fate she narrowly missed when a Turkish gendarme seized her and her older sister on a city street). She recounts with unstereotyped directness her personally experienced sights, sounds and emotions in the events of the family's desperate escape from the last of the killings by Turks. It ends with the family finally reaching safety within the United States, only to be devastated by the loss of our much-loved mother.

The memoir ends with the death of our mother, Daisy Uvezian Bagdikian, on July 5, 1923, when my mother was 36, and Lydia was 14 years old.

Production of this memoir has been a joint effort of my two sisters, Mrs. Cynthia Fairburn, of Ojai, California, and Mrs. Nora Armstrong, of Lakewood, California, and me. Lydia's typed pages were scanned for transformation into computerized form and scanning errors corrected in my own computer. My wife, Marlene, provided invaluable help in the preparation of the scanned copy into clear, conventional computer type. Any awkward editing is my fault, not theirs.

Ben H. Bagdikian
Berkeley, California, USA
December 13, 1997



This snapshot, probably taken in 1922 in the Boston area, shows the author of this memoir, Lydia, then 13, far left in the back row. Also shown are other members of the family who figure in the memoir. Next to Lydia is our father, Aram Bagdikian, then 40, and Tirzah, 15. In the front row are Cynthia, left, 11, and Nora, 9. Missing is a major member, our mother, who was hospitalized, and Ben Hur, then 2, presumably being cared for at home by a family friend.

Members of the immediate family described in the events of Lydia's memoir are my father, mother, four sisters, and myself as an infant.

Professor (later, The Reverend) Aram Toros Bagdikian
Born August 15, 1882 Died August 23, 1957

Daisy Uvezian Bagdikian
Born December 13, 1886 Died July 5, 1923

Tirzah Daisy Bagdikian
Born May 17, 1907 Died May 23, 1990

Lydia Natalie Bagdikian
Born January 8, 1909 Died June 8, 1993

Cynthia Lucille Bagdikian
Born January 8, 1911

Nora Althea Bagdikian
Born June 7, 1913

Ben Hur Haig Bagdikian
Born January 30, 1920

CHAPTER 1

Tarsus

"If any stranger asks you what language you are speaking, say 'American,'" Mother warned us.

"But why can't we say 'English' anymore? What's the difference?"

As usual, Mother was ready for our barrage of questions. It was 1914 and Turkey and England were at war. English subjects were leaving the city as fast as they could. Anyone heard speaking English would be placed under suspicion. America was not yet at war, so we could speak American! To the credulous man of the streets such an explanation might be acceptable, but among those who might not be so gullible, we must speak either Turkish or must not be heard speaking at all.

Papa taught physics and chemistry at St. Paul's College, in Tarsus, Cilicia, in Turkey. It was an American College, therefore there was no talk yet of closing the school because of the advent of war. Some of the instructors who were English had to leave. This caused vacancies on the staff. Mother was asked to teach English and music during this emergency. With both Mother and Papa on the staff, we practically lived on the college campus.

Mother and Papa had planned to come to America soon after they were married. First, Papa wanted to complete some post-graduate work at the American College in Beirut. Then, before they had a chance to put their house in order and uproot themselves for the promised land beyond the seas, there was the great Massacre of 1909 during which time their second child [Lydia] was born. During this massacre when so many Armenians were killed as well as a few Americans, Dr. Thomas Christy's son-in-law, Dr. Rogers, was also a victim.

Dr. Christy was the president of St. Paul's College and a close friend of Mother and Papa. The death of his son-in-law was a great blow to him and all the faculty members. Mary Christy Rogers was a beloved friend of students and teachers alike. The loss of her husband cast an added gloom to the already dark days of the city following the massacre.

The massacre of 1909, leaving in its wake destruction and death of beloved ones, serve as an added stimulus to prepare Mother and Papa to make plans at last to come to America.

When Papa submitted his resignation to Dr. Christy, Dr. Christy reminded him that it would not be easy to go to a strange land with two young children unless he had saved a great deal and could be financially independent for at least a year or two after his arrival. A promotion and an increase in salary persuaded Papa to wait a little longer until he was financially ready. Each time he thought he was ready, Dr. Christy again promoted him and raised his salary and made him feel the college could not run without him. This must have inflated Papa's ego because the trip to America was postponed "only to make it easier when we get there," Papa would say to Mother.

Although the plan to come to America had been postponed several times, the experiment to speak English at home as soon as the children were born had not been postponed.

Papa was not happy unless he was experimenting in something. He was, therefore, heartily in accord with Mother when she suggested that since they would eventually come to America, they speak English at home so that their children's mother tongue would be English. Friends told them it could not be done—not when everyone else spoke another language. However, our parents were adamant and carried out the experiment. At first it was difficult for us to play with other children who spoke Turkish, but we were soon becoming bilingual.

Turkish was the language of Cilicia. For generations Turks and Armenians had claimed this area but now it was under Turkish control and during the many massacres that occurred, Armenians were not allowed to speak their mother tongue. There were some

who learned it in spite of the dangers entailed, but as a whole, Armenians of this section had to adopt Turkish as their mother tongue. Those who could afford it or had the opportunity to study Armenian spoke it whenever they could. During World War I speaking Armenian was considered a crime and many Armenians were banished and exiled for that reason.

One of our constant playmates was Minor Rogers. Of course, he spoke English, too, but it surprised everyone to hear him also speaking Turkish very well. When Minor was not at our house, we were at his house. He lived with his mother at his grandfather's house which was a part of the college campus. The president's house was just inside the great gate of the campus. A beautiful white marble stairway led to the garden which was famous for its violet beds. In this garden were spent the happiest days of my childhood. In this garden began our school days.

There were no public schools. The poor people could not send their children to any school. People of average means sent their children to schools sponsored by their churches. We could not go to the church schools because English was not the language of the school. Our education, therefore, was a problem. Tutelage was the only solution.

As soon as we were old enough to talk, we were expected to participate in the evening family prayers. As soon as we were able to read, we were expected to read a Bible selection before the prayer.

On a day when it was my turn to lead the family prayers, I cut it short so that we could all rush to bed. We were anxious to know if Jean Valjean would be saved. Last night he was hiding in the sewers of Paris.

Mother had begun to tell us the story of *Les Miserables*. Rule Number One for our bedtime story was that we were not to tease Mother to continue when she had decided to end it for that night. We often broke this rule but Mother did not. Rule Number Two was that when anyone was naughty, that meant no bedtime story for her.

"Some mothers send their children to bed without supper," I would say. "Why can't I go without supper but listen to the story?"

This was ruled out by Mother and we could not even substitute corporal punishment. There was no mitigation of the penalty. The supreme sacrifice for being naughty was NO BEDTIME STORY.

Our parents did not have any naughty daughters during the Les Miserables period. I say "daughters" because we did not have brothers. This must have been a great disappointment to Mother because she had a name selected for her first born who, she was sure, would be a boy. The name was to be BEN HUR.

Ben Hur was the story which preceded Les Miserables on our bedtime story list. It was a story which had fascinated Mother as a young girl and she had vowed when she had children her first son would be named Ben Hur and her first daughter, Tirzah, who was Ben Hur's sister in the story.

Mother said Tirzah arrived before Ben Hur but she did not mind. After all, if God wanted to have Tirzah come before Ben Hur, Mother had no objections. She would name the next child Ben Hur.

Then came Lydia! Two years later, on Lydia's second birthday, Cynthia arrived! Friends did not know whether they should congratulate Mother and Papa or commiserate.

The arrival of each baby caused so much excitement that Mother felt she must devise a system whereby the new baby would not cause any jealousy. She and Papa planned that every time a new baby was to come, the baby would bring presents to the sisters and, they hoped, someday, to the brothers. It was like Christmas at our house every time a baby came. The baby always brought us just what we wanted. We were so happy on these occasions that we did not stop to think how the baby knew just what we wanted.

The drawback to this plan was that we soon began to complain because babies did not come often enough. We felt we should have a new baby every month! Papa and Mother had to face their first examination—why we could not have a new brother or sister every month!

Mother soon found out that her first answer was not going to be satisfactory. She had told us she did not have time to go to the hospital to get another baby whenever we wanted one. She had not counted on having such precocious children!

"The neighbors had babies without going to the hospital," we said. Mother's ability to afford hospital service was certainly a handicap in this respect.

Two years after Cynthia's birth, our parents announced that Ben Hur would soon arrive. We took inventory of our toys, hair ribbons, dolls, and each day the list became longer and longer. Surely Ben Hur would bring even more than the sisters had.

It was time for us to know where Ben Hur was coming from. Mother was ready for us. "Babies are so tiny when God first creates them," she said, "so tiny, in fact, that even mothers cannot see them. So God places them next to the mother's heart, inside where no one can touch them or step on them by mistake. When they are big enough to be seen by everyone, then God lets them be born." This answer satisfied us for the time being.

As soon as college closed for the summer we were ready to go to Marash. Tarsus was too hot in the summer. Papa owned several vineyards and a summer home in Marash, a city in the Amanus Mountain range with ideal weather in the summer. Papa and Mother had both been born in Marash. There was an American college for girls in Marash where Mother had gone to school. She had become engaged to Papa one summer, much against her mother's will, after he had returned from Tarsus following his graduation from St. Paul's College.

Grandma had never forgiven Papa for marrying her daughter. She had ambitious plans for her only daughter. The son of a very wealthy merchant family in the city wanted to marry Mother but Mother wanted to marry for love. Grandpa thought Mother should marry the man she wanted.

It was as exciting as the stories Mother used to tell us to hear of her romance with Papa. It was our favorite story. We wanted to know how she dared disobey her mother. Our mother disobeying HER mother! It seemed incredible to us that Mother would do such a thing.

"When it is a question of love," Mother had said, "it is not disobeying. No one can give advice on love. One might understand another's mind but not another's heart."

"So what happened, what happened?" We would tease her day after day until she would tell us little by little how she finally had her way — with the aid of her father. Grandpa had persuaded Grandma that in the matter of love they would not interfere with Daisy's life.

"But to be married just to a teacher," Grandma had said haughtily. "Jesus was a teacher too," Grandpa had reminded her. After that remark Grandma could not very well condemn Papa for his profession but there was always some other excuse. He was too impulsive, too daring. Even while in his early teens he had joined older men in defending against a massacre. Grandma had heard about this and called his bravery indiscretion.

"He won't be afraid to save his wife and family from danger." Grandpa had come to Mother's rescue again.

Mother was nineteen years old when she was married and Papa twenty-three. Soon after her wedding her father had died suddenly in an accident. It was a grief that was hard to assuage.

"If only you could have known your grandfather," Mother used to say to us.

Soon after Grandpa's death, Uncle Stephen had gone to America. Uncle Hagop, the oldest boy, had gone to Europe to study music. Uncle Haig came to Tarsus to live with us and to attend St. Paul's College. Uncle Herant [in America, he was "Uncle Fred"] was the baby of the family. He was not yet ten years old when Grandpa died so he was the only child left at home with Grandma.

Before we left Tarsus to go to Marash awaiting Ben Hur's arrival, Grandma came to Tarsus with Uncle Herant to bid us all goodbye. She was going to America with Herant to join Uncle Stephen.

"You will be there when we come, Grandma," we had said.

"If your father is through with all his experiments," she said bitterly.

Father had been experimenting again! First, it was a new form of irrigation he was using on his vineyards in Marash. He had read about it in an American magazine. "After all," Papa said, "that's what Bagdikian means — one who plants vineyards." He had also invested some of his savings (and Mother's share of Grandpa's estate) on a

silkworm project. According to theory, this should have been a great success, but it was not, as Grandma so happily reminded the young scientist before she left for America.

A few hours' ride by train from Tarsus was the city of Mersin on the easternmost coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Grandma and Uncle Herant were to sail for America from Smyrna. Mersin would be their port of embarkation. Mother and Papa, Tirzah and I, and Uncle Haig took the train at Tarsus to accompany Grandma and Uncle Herant to Mersin to see them off. Cynthia was only about a year old so we left her with Semma.

Semma was Grandmother's maid who came to live with Mother when Mother was married. No one knew Semma's nationality. She was a foundling left at Grandmother's house when Mother was a child. As Semma grew older, it was discovered that she could not speak at all due to an injury to her vocal chords. When she came to live with Mother and Papa, Papa felt he should send her to a doctor to see what could be done about her speech. "Another experiment!" Grandma had sighed. So Semma, at great expense, had been sent to several doctors and had several operations. She began to talk gradually but it was still very difficult to understand her. It was like watching a child learn to talk, Papa had said. The family became quite adept in understanding her. It was a point of great pride on our part to interpret to our friends what Semma was saying. She could speak Turkish much better than English but she would always scold us in English .

I was always excited when we took a train trip with Papa. He would get off at every station and we would not see him again until the train had started. "He missed the train!" we would say excitedly to Mother but she always remained calm. After the train had gained momentum and was speeding along, just when we thought he really had missed the train, he would walk into our compartment with a big grin. No matter how many times he did this, I never could get used to it.

"It's only a game," he would say.

"The children get too excited," Mother would warn him. "I think some day, you really will miss it," Mother once said without anger in

her voice. "Anger," she used to say, "is like a petticoat. It should never show."

Dr. and Mrs. Rejebian met us at the station in Mersin. The Rejebians were Papa's and Mother's best friends. He was a very successful doctor. They had at least, one thing in common with Mother and Papa — they, too, had only daughters. They tried to persuade Mother to remain in Mersin for Ben Hur's arrival.

"We should be the first to know if it is a boy," Dr. Rejebian said. "Maybe you would have better luck in my hospital."

"I wish he could be born in America," Mother said. "The next one will," Papa added.

Dr. Rejebian had taken care of all the details for Grandmother's departure. His carriage was ready to take us all to the pier where he had hired two small boats to serve as tenders to take us to the steamer. It was my first boat ride and although I was too young to know much about danger, I remember being very frightened when the boat rolled and rode over the waves. When we reached the steamer, just Grandma and Uncle Herant were allowed to embark. We all kissed them goodbye. Everyone cried, especially Mother and Grandma.

We stayed overnight at the Rejebian's house and the next day took the train back to Tarsus. We found Cynthia very ill.

"What happened?" Mother asked Semma.

"I don't know," she said, "but maybe she ate too many eggs."

"How many did you give her?" Mother asked.

"I don't know," Semma said, "she wanted them all so I gave them to her." Mother took inventory of the eggs. There were no eggs in the house.

"Where are the shells?" she asked.

"Maybe she ate them too," Tîrzah said.

"She played with them and crushed them," Semma said. So she never knew how many eggs Cynthia ate.

"I feel quite sure there were nine eggs in the house," Mother said to Papa.

"I hope Semma ate most of them," Papa said.

"Semma never eats eggs," Mother reminded him.

"How long did you cook the eggs?" Mother asked Semma.

"The same way Olivia Ghanum does," she replied. [Ghanum is a Turkish title for a married woman, the equivalent of "Mrs." in English.]

"How long is that?" Papa asked.

"Soft boiled eggs—as long as it takes to recite 'The Lord's Prayer,'" Mother answered.

Soon after Grandma went to America, Uncle Haig died of meningitis. He was in Papa's chemistry class at college. He also had lived with us. Mother had lost a brother and Papa had lost not only a fine brother-in-law but also a fine student and, he used to say, "A fine son to me."

All of Uncle Haig's classmates and teachers, Dr. and Mrs. Christy, many friends and students came to the funeral. After the funeral Minor's mother, Mrs. Rogers, came to console Mother.

The last tie with her family had been severed.

"You now have two brothers and a mother in America, one brother in Europe, and a father and brother in heaven, Mamma. Will Uncle Haig tell Grandma that Grandma went to America?" we used to say. "Whom would you like to see first?" Even Mother would smile at our guileless questions.

Soon after Uncle Haig's death, college closed for the summer and we prepared to go to our summer home in Marash.

Friends came to the railroad station to see us off. We were leaving Tarsus for Marash via Aleppo. From Aleppo to Marash there was no train service; it was necessary to hire a caravan for this lap of the journey. Mother, Papa and Semma each had a horse but we were placed in "basket" seats, two on each horse. I think I slept most of the way. We stopped in the city of Aintab on the way to visit friends and to break up the journey. It was a mountainous road and even during peacetime there was always danger of Turkish robbers, but Papa always hired Turkish guides to minimize any danger.

Our summer home was near the American College for Girls on a hill in the outskirts of the city. It was a very large house and we shared it with friends of the owners who lived there the year around. The main house was two stories high with a marble

veranda. In another section across the entrance road was the kitchen, the pool where perishables were kept, and the bath houses. There was a large yard with many fruit trees which we climbed and where we played hide and seek. From the veranda we could see the entire city of Marash. The steeples of the three Protestant churches, the Catholic Church, and the Gregorian Church towered above the other low buildings. The only other structures of any height were the minarets from which we could hear the call of prayer at sunset by the Turkish muessins who, it seemed, were trying to compete with the bells of the Christian churches. The three Protestant Churches were of the same denomination — Congregational. They were built in different sections of this city of about 35,000 population. One could go to any church he pleased but it was natural to go to the church located nearest to one's home.

One thought of First Church as the wealthy church because wealthier people lived in that section. Second church was more in the middle class. Third church was in the poorer section of the city.

Mother's family had been members of First Church, Papa's of Third Church. After they were married, they attended Third Church most of the time but visited First and Second Churches also. I remember Third Church better than the others. People used to say to Mother, "How nice of you to come to our church. And are these the children who speak English?"

"Yes," Mother would answer proudly, "and as soon as they are older, they will be taught Armenian also. They can speak a little Turkish now." Then we would show off our Turkish but would soon revert to English subconsciously.

Soon after our arrival in Marash, Mother went to the hospital. It was the American Hospital in Marash and was about a ten-minute walk from our house. All the neighbors and friends were excited also. Surely, this time it would be Ben Hur, they said. Papa was at the hospital most of the day. "Getting the presents the baby brought wrapped up," he would say. Only the anticipation of the excitement of the baby's coming home and all the presents made tolerable our hair combing routine.

When Mother was home, she and Semma took turns combing

our long pigtails, but now Semma did it every day. She was very rough. It seemed on the days it was her turn to comb our hair, everything went wrong. I am sure, now, that we deserved her rough treatment. We wriggled and screamed every time she tried to unsnarl a knot, just to hear her scold us in English. Our playmates and some of the adults, too, would hang around to hear Semma speak English on these occasions. Only those who really heard her would believe that she could speak a little.

It was during one of these hair combing episodes that we saw Papa coming from the hospital. Tirzah, Cynthia, and I were lined up on the veranda as in a barber's shop for the morning torture. When I saw Papa, I jumped up from under the comb without thinking of the consequences. The pain made me yell for a moment. Then I heard Semma say, "Leedia, come here, you." Semma's commanding English distracted the attention of our audience for a moment, but soon all eyes were fixed on Papa.

Papa was coming toward us smiling, shoulders straight, head up as usual, walking as if he owned the world. Everyone said, "Ben Hur must have arrived!"

Papa walked through the gate, triumphantly announcing, "Nora has arrived!" Everyone looked disappointed but Papa. "Now I have four million dollars," he said. "Four daughters! I am a rich man."

There were no congratulations and Papa had to console all those about him. "Mother is fine," he said, "and Nora is beautiful," quickly adding that she had brought beautiful gifts for us and that we must get ready for the big celebration when Mother brings her home.

Friends wondered where the name Nora came from. Tirzah's name was understood and accepted by all. Lydia was from the Acts chapter of the Bible. In later years I often used to wonder if Mother knew about Lydia Pinkham. She seemed to know everything else about America! Cynthia was named after the German nurse Mother had when Cynthia was born. Mother liked the nurse as well as her name. Although Mother hoped confidently that her fourth child would be Ben Hur, she was prepared with an alternative. She had been reading a book in which the beautiful, Irish heroine's name

was Nora. She liked the name of the heroine as well as her character.

"Not one child with an Armenian name!" some friend had remarked.

Mother's homecoming with Nora was a gala event. Presents were endless and we did not question how Nora had brought them. Soon after the novelty of our presents had worn off, we wanted to know when Ben Hur would come. Papa had already promised that Ben Hur would come some day.

The summer was spent visiting friends, having many callers spending a few days at different vineyards. Friends with sons whose education they were planning would come to see Papa about advice. Could he arrange to have them attend St. Paul's College? Could he find living quarters? Could he find work for some of them? Papa had earned his way through college and appreciated the needs of others. He encouraged them. "If you aren't afraid of work, you can do it," was becoming a byword.

When we left Marash to return to Tarsus for the winter, we had more than one addition in the caravan en route to Aleppo. We not only had our new baby sister, but half a dozen boys returning with us to go to college in Tarsus. They had already adopted Mother and Papa as their new parents while in a strange city far from home. Now we would have even more visitors at our house. When we returned to Tarsus, Papa used to say to friends who had come to see the new baby, "I not only brought another daughter, but also half a dozen sons. I am a rich man. On a Sunday afternoon I have more boys around the house than girls." He was happiest when the house was full of people.

"You should be a minister," many of his friends had advised him. He liked to philosophize and was an expert at quoting statistics. In addition to his more than normal share of gregariousness, he was a raconteur.

Although he was not ordained as a minister, he had studied theology and was often invited as a guest preacher. His zest for life was contagious. He could sing the hymns louder than the rest of the congregation. When he sang and preached, no one could go to sleep.

Grandmother had called his avocation in the ministry another experiment but Papa had replied, "Everything in life is an experiment." When Grandmother had left for America, Papa's last words to her had been, "Don't conquer all the New World — leave some experiments for me." Even Grandma had smiled.

In the fall when we returned to Tarsus, Papa was very proud of his four daughters. Nora was a lively child with big, black eyes and friends had nicknamed her "Tchamich," which means black raisins in Turkish, because she had big, black eyes.

When school opened many members of the faculty, students, and friends came to see the new baby. "My fourth daughter!" Papa would say, praising us all equally, lest there be cause for jealousy. Tirzah's nickname from Papa was "Cherry Lips," which described her well. Cynthia had golden brown curls and was nicknamed "Goldilocks." Apparently I had no outstanding feature. My nickname was "Lemonade" — "because," Papa would explain, with a twinkle in his eyes, "she can be sweet and sour at the same time. It is an ordeal to make her eat her supper."

I was not happy about my nickname, (especially when compared to the others) but one day a hero came to my rescue. Papa's chemistry students often spent Sunday afternoons at our home. Papa was again taking pleasure in explaining that my nickname was "Lemonade," for the benefit of a few new students. One of the students must have felt sorry for me. He picked me up in his arms and whispered in my ear. The sour in the lemonade began to turn sweet. What he said had made me happy. I felt we had a secret and soon I would show them!

It seemed a long time before Papa called me "Lemonade" again. It used to be so often, I thought, and now that I want him to, he won't say it. There was a faculty dinner at our house one day and later as we filed into the living room to kiss Mother and Papa good night before Semma began her "Quick, come!" the moment I was waiting for came. Papa began, "This is 'Cherry Lips,' this is 'Goldilocks,' and this is 'Lemonade' — because she can be sweet and sour at the same time."

"Well, anyhow," I said, almost prematurely, "lemonade is

refreshing!"The room was filled with laughter and I am sure Papa and his friends thought here was a precocious child! I loved my student hero even more from that day on. In fact, I decided right then that some day I would marry him!

This was the fall that we were supposed to have gone to America where Mother had planned that our education would begin. But since we were to be here another year, Cynthia was too young and Nora only a baby, it was decided that Tirzah and I should start school. The only Christian schools in the city were sponsored by the different churches. Tirzah and I would be misfits in such schools where either Turkish or Armenian was spoken. Minor Rogers' mother was also concerned about her son's education. It was therefore decided that Tirzah, Minor, and I should be tutored. Mrs. Rogers was to teach us reading and writing in English and French.

We went to school with Papa every morning. Our house was within walking distance of the college campus. Our classroom was the garden in the home of Dr. Christy. Our chairs and desks were among the violet beds. We could hear the college bells ring and could see the college boys pass to class. This was a very pleasant distraction. On rainy days we would have class in one of the parlors near the garden. This was a special treat to me because to get to the parlor we would have to climb a long, white marble stairway. This made me feel like a little princess.

Another very pleasant distraction was the proximity of the kitchen to the garden. We found out that the chef's birthday was on May 17-Tirzah's birthday. The chef promised us there would be a cake to interrupt our lessons when that day arrived. Minor and I could not find any cooks who had birthdays on our birthdays.

Twice a week we had a tutor come to the house to teach Tirzah and me Armenian. Once a week Mother taught us sewing and cooking. Semma did not like this because we cluttered up her kitchen. Mother said if we did, we must learn how to clean kitchens. This suited Semma because often we helped her clean even when we did not have a lesson.

Once a week we watched a laundress do the laundry. She was a Bulgarian woman. It fascinated us to watch her do the laundry

because her right thumb was missing. When we played house and did the laundry, we would bend our thumbs in imitation of her. When we asked her what happened to her thumb, she would say, "Ask your mother. She is a good woman. She understands everything." All Mother would tell us was that we were to be very kind to her because she had suffered a great deal and had fled from her home, losing her husband and children. After that we practically did the wash for her. She used to say, "You will become good women some day like your mother." We said when we grew up we would become laundresses, too.



CHAPTER 2

Puzzles

After a few Armenian lessons, our teacher stopped coming.

"Why doesn't Diggin Ovsanna come anymore?" we asked Mother.

"Because it is not safe for us to let the Turks know she is teaching Armenian."

Many things were happening to puzzle us. There were hushed tones when guests came. But guests did not come so often now. The streets were full of soldiers. It was 1914. The Turks were no longer friends with the English. Now we must speak American, not English. Now Mother was going to school with us every morning. The English citizens who were on the college faculty had left. There was a shortage of instructors. Mother was to teach English and music. Mrs. Rogers was needed as an instructor also, so Mother and Mrs. Rogers took turns teaching us between classes.

There was great excitement in the college campus one day. The students were all gathered in the yard, looking toward the barracks with solemn faces. The field outside the campus yard which was next to the Turkish barracks was thronged by a mob. Tirzah, Minor, and I were anxious to join the crowd but Mother came to whisk us off to a back parlor.

Everyone tried to go on as if nothing was wrong, but there was an air of restlessness. One evening, Mother said we would all go visiting, even Semma, because it was best to be together all the time. This was unusual but anything different seemed exciting to us. Even Nora would go out tonight.

The Faculty Club was putting on a Shakespearian play, Julius Caesar, and asked Mother to play the piano for incidental music.

Mother did not want to leave us alone with Semma at home so it was arranged that we would all go to the college. Nora and Cynthia could be put to sleep in Doctor Christy's apartment while Tirzah and I would be allowed to attend the play. Semma was to come with us, to look after Tirzah and me, as Mother and Papa would both be backstage.

It was exciting to watch the actors come on stage with funny costumes and shining swords. I could not understand the things they were saying but got excited every time one of the actors came on the stage because I knew Papa was going to be in it. Mother had told us just enough about it, so we would not be afraid. Papa would not be the one who would be killed by make believe, she had said, so we would not be frightened.

"Why is Mother playing so loud while they are killing the man?" I said out loud.

"Hush!" Semma said.

When the "killing" was over, everyone in the audience clapped so I thought the audience must have been glad. The man must have been a bad man.

Someone was saying something about "lend me your ears."

"What does he want our ears for?" I said and disturbed some more people. Soon I fell asleep so didn't know who lent their ears or what they did about the blood that came out from Julius Caesar.

The next day we showered Mother with questions and Cynthia again cried because she had not seen something we had.

"Even Tirzah and Lydia were too young to go," Mother said, "but it is better now when we go out that we all go out together. Someday you will like all the plays William Shakespeare wrote. When you are older you will understand and like it better." I didn't think even when I grew older I would want to lend my ears to anyone .

It was becoming more and more difficult to keep secrets from us. We were becoming quite proficient in speaking Turkish. It was not easy to hide the cause of this excitement. People all around us were talking about it.

Whatever it was, it explained why we always had to be together, even the babies, during Julius Caesar. It must have been the

explanation for the crowds that were gathering outside the college grounds.

We had dinner with the Christys the evening of the crowds, so that Mother and Papa could take us home after the crowd had been dispersed. We heard people talking about someone being hung. There was no gaiety this evening.

On the way home, we said, "Mother, who was being hung?"

She said, "'Hanged', not 'hung.'"

That was the only answer we could get.

The memory of that day has been hard to erase from my childhood days. In my adult years I have often wondered what would have happened in America if there had been a public hanging? Would curious crowds watch the gallows being built? Would there have been vendors of balloons, hot dogs, popcorn, as there had been vendors that day in Tarsus?

Would ladies and children have been among the crowd as there had been in Tarsus?

(Years later, in America, I took vacations for several summers with friends in New Hampshire. The husband of a close friend was a wrestling promoter in a summer resort in New Hampshire. Whenever I went to visit them, I was invited to the wrestling matches. I had ringside seats. The first time I went out of curiosity. The next time I offered to help out in the ticket office. "No such thing," my friends said. "You are a guest. You must have a ringside seat."

(I watched in agony as wrestlers were hurled and bitten. I heard women as well as men shout, "Bite him! Kill him!" Then I would think back to that day in Tarsus. Then I would remember reading about the days of the gladiators, of arenas filled with spectators, men and women alike, paying to watch the cruelty. I would think of Madame Defarge and great mobs watching the carts go by, waiting for the guillotine to get revenge. And I concluded, "Mankind must all be alike. All human beings must in some degree enjoy sadism or masochism." Maybe we were born to enjoy or suffer vicariously with others.)

In Tarsus, Mother was writing a letter to Uncle Hagop. He was

now living in Aleppo. Just before the start of the war he had returned from Germany where he had been studying the violin. He stayed at our house for a few weeks, but before he left for Aleppo he gave a concert. Mother accompanied him at the piano. It must have been an ordeal for him to practice with four little girls running around the house. We teased him to play something special for us.

"If you want any peace before you start to practice for the concert," Mother said, "you might as well play their favorite concerto. They will have to promise to let you alone after that."

We promised. He did play our favorite concerto — without accompaniment. Mother had named it "The Barnyard Concerto." He could make his violin bark like a dog, bray like a donkey, neigh like a horse, crow like a rooster, and squeal like a pig. We clapped. We laughed.

"More, more," we yelled. "Make it sing like a bird," we insisted. "The adagio movement, please," Mother chuckled. We clapped, yelled, "Bravo! Bravo!" We stamped our feet. We knew all the tricks.

"Here is your claque for the concert," Mother laughed. Then we were all shooed away so that she and Uncle could get down to serious practice.

The college auditorium was the center of all civic activities. Uncle Hagop's concert was given there. I think all the faculty and students attended. We all went to the concert, even Semma. Semma was very proud of Uncle Hagop. She knew him better than we did. After all, she had lived in his house before Mother was married. Uncle Hagop always brought her a present when he came to visit us.

We did not like his real concert as well as the one he had given us that afternoon.

"Why didn't you play our concerto?" we asked.

"Because that is special, just for you," he said and we pestered him for it again.

Sometimes we heard things that maybe we shouldn't, but these things were always more fun to hear than the things we were supposed to hear. Uncle Hagop was tall and handsome and an eligible bachelor. At the concert we had overheard someone say, "If

he doesn't marry that girl, she will die of a broken heart."

When we got home, Tirzah said, "Uncle, who will die of a broken heart if you don't marry her?" All the adults raised their eyebrows. "That's what we heard someone say at the concert," Tirzah added.

"I'll marry the girl you children pick for me," he said and dismissed the question.

"Now we have a task," we thought and started naming the ladies we liked without regard to marital status, age, or appearance. I think we really must have stirred up a subject that was lying dormant. After we were put to bed we could hear in hushed tones the name of a lady we did not know, the words "very beautiful" and "her illness." Soon slumber overtook us and we forgot the subject.

When Uncle Hagop left for Aleppo, we all rode in a carriage and accompanied him to the railroad station. Cynthia was so frightened of trains that Mother said we must take her to the station as often as we could so that she would see trains often enough to overcome her fears. No one could understand why she was afraid of trains. She was afraid of cats, too.

Cynthia received a very beautiful white cat for a birthday present so that she could love it and not be afraid anymore. This was the first time Cynthia and I did not get presents exactly alike. Since we had the same birthday, we always received the same presents. I wanted a doll and Cynthia did not like dolls, so Mother thought that this time we could receive different presents.

Cynthia was so frightened by the cat that she took my doll and struck it against an iron bed and broke it to a million pieces. The birthday party almost turned into a catastrophe, but Mother told Cynthia that since she did not like her present, she could give me the cat and have my doll! When I picked up the beautiful cat, Cynthia forgot all her fears and snatched the cat away from me. That was the end of her fear of cats—and I did get another doll later.

Now Cynthia's second fear had to be overcome. When we reached the railroad station with Uncle Hagop and saw the train approaching from the direction of Mersin, Cynthia screamed.

"I can't understand it," Papa said.

"We will come to visit you in Aleppo when the danger of war has

passed," Papa said to Uncle just before he boarded the train.

"We can all come to see you but Cynthia," Mother added. "Since she is afraid of trains, she will not want to go."

We all boarded the train with Uncle Hagop to visit with him until the train left, except Cynthia.

"Cynthia can stay with Semma on the platform," Mother said.

"I want to go on the train too," Cynthia cried. And she has been riding trains around the globe ever since!

Mother seemed very sad after Uncle Hagop left.

"Will the Turks make him a soldier?" we asked Mother one day. She was surprised to find out that we had again been overhearing adult conversation. "I am afraid they are learning Turkish too rapidly," Mother said to Papa with a smile.

All was well with our world when Mother smiled. But several times lately we had seen tears in her eyes. Something was surely wrong.

Mother was writing a letter to Uncle Hagop.

"Are you writing him about that lady whose heart he is breaking?" we asked.

"I am going to read you the letter I am writing him," she said, and read only excerpts, I am sure. She had written him, "We hear we shall soon have guests from the North. They may come in their new carriages."

"What guests?" we asked.

"Explain it," Papa said. "They should learn to understand and keep secrets."

"I think you already know what war means," Mother said. "It is like two people fighting. Only it is two nations, and sometimes, like this war, many nations fighting."

"But why do they fight?" we interrupted.

"Why do you fight sometimes?" Mother said. "Because you want something that does not belong to you, and you can't have it. And sometimes it belongs to you and you should rightfully have it, so you must fight to keep it. Wars could be settled like the fights children have by being unselfish and giving up what does not belong to them, by being fair and by trying to understand the other person..."

"But the Turks fight because they are bad, aren't they? They kill Christians, don't they?"

"Sometimes. But in this war, Christian nations are fighting with one another also. When people become selfish and greedy they don't trust one another and it does not matter whether they are Christians or Turks. Because they don't trust each other, they even open up letters that do not belong to them. This letter that I am writing to Uncle Hagop will be opened. If there is anything in it that the enemy does not like..."

"Are the Turks the enemies?" we interrupted again.

"Turks, Germans, and other Christians, too," Mother continued. "If there is anything in the letter they do not like, they will tear it up and not have it sent to Uncle Hagop. They will censor the letter. That means whatever I have written will be in vain. But if they don't understand what I have written, they may deliver the letter. When I said to Uncle Hagop that we may have guests from the North, he will know whom I mean, but I don't think the person who examines the letter will know."

"But who are the guests and why do they have new carriages?" We were impatient.

"Now, that will be our secret," Mother said. "By the guests I mean the English army, and by the new carriages I mean airplanes-carriages that fly in the sky instead of being drawn by horses. If you will promise not to talk about this again, next time we hear the airplanes-the 'flying carriages'- I will wake you up and point them out to you in the sky. And you must not be afraid if it is noisy."

So when the "flying carriages" came in the middle of the night, Mother kept her promise and we saw in the dark the meteors created by man in the skies and we were not afraid.

That summer we could not go to Marash because of the war. All Christians were looked upon with suspicion. Already we were hearing of local massacres and of Armenian men being forced to join the Turkish Army. Fortunately, the instructors at St. Paul's College were safe for the time being because it was an American College and America was not at war yet.

"I think we can go to Numroon this summer," Papa said.

Numroon was a summer resort not so far as Marash. It was in a valley surrounded by beautiful mountains. In the fertile lands of the valley were vineyards and fruit groves where Papa hired a house and orchard for the summer. Most of the families of the college faculty spent the summer here, including Dr. and Mrs. Christy and Mrs. Rogers and Minor.

The trip was two days' journey from Tarsus by horseback. Papa and Mother had their own horses—"Bach" and "Beethoven." Mother had named them.

"Tirzah is old enough to ride now," Mother said, "and I am sure Brahms must be waiting to join his associates." So Papa bought a horse for Tirzah and we christened him. Beethoven and Brahms did not cause us any trouble. But every time we called out "Bach!" everyone within hearing distance would jump up and look around. "Bach" sounds very much like the word "look" in Turkish, and everyone thought we were yelling at them to look at something. This may have fazed Bach but it did not faze Papa. Papa was an excellent horseman and did not mind having people "bach" at him and Bach. Beethoven was a very mild horse, and Mother used to say she felt like a traitor every time she played the "Revolutionary Etude!"

Papa hired some "ghutterjus"—men who rented their horses and services—to transport Cynthia, Nora, Semma and me. Since we were too young, we were placed in the "basket" compartments slung over the saddle of the horse and were very comfortable with cushions, pillows, and our toys. The only thing that bothered us was that the baskets were too deep and we could not see everything.

On this trip to Numroon other members of the faculty and their families left with us, so we formed quite a caravan, the adults riding on the horses and all the children in the basket compartments. Our guides and ghutturjus were well paid and therefore friendly. They had bargained for the return trip and were instructed when to come back for us. There was no other means of transportation to Numroon.

We were excited when we reached Numroon. There was a huge

empty castle near our summer home. Many stories were told about its ancient history. We would often play there with the other children. Mother said it reminded her of the setting of Hamlet with whom we were not yet acquainted, but Mother said she would tell us that story when we grew older.

"But why can't you tell it to us now?" we teased.

"Because you are not old enough to understand," she said.

When we asked, "Why?" she said:

"There would be no fun in growing older if each day you could not understand something that you did not understand the day before. The understanding grows the same way as the body grows. Can you wear Mother's shoes? What happened when you tried them the other day? They fell off, didn't they? What happened when you played house and wore my dresses? Did they fit you? When you grow up, they will fit you. When you grow up, your understanding will also grow up, and you can understand about Macbeth and many other wonderful stories I have for you and many which you can read for yourselves. You can't understand everything at once anymore than you can eat your breakfast, dinner, and supper all at once. When you are hungry in the morning, you eat your breakfast, but there is no room for dinner. When dinner time comes, you can eat just your dinner but you must wait for supper time to eat your supper. Growing up is just like that. And understanding is just like that. And to grow up and understand is so much joy."

"But Diggin Dorian said one day that it was terrible to be old."

"She is not feeling well. I think that is what she must have meant. One can feel terrible when one is young, too, if one is not well. That's why it is so important for young people to obey their parents and do the things that will keep them healthy and happy. That's why Mother always gives you the food that is good for your health. That's why you should always eat what is good for you."

Mother never forced us to eat anything we did not want, but it was made clear to us from the first day we were old enough to sit at the family table that the words, "I don't like this," or, "I don't want to eat this," were taboo. If we did not like it, we were to make believe we were eating it and not say anything or make any faces.

And there were to be no substitutes. "There will always be something someone won't like," Mother would say, "but let's see how well we can make believe we like it."

When we knew some member of the family did not like a certain dish, we would all watch her to see how well she could make believe. At first I was the worst sport but after my nickname, "Lemonade," and the challenge of the game, Mother used to say she could not tell whether I really liked everything or I was a good actress.

I was anxious to grow up. It really must be fun, I thought, to know everything as Mother did. Often Mother would catch me gazing at an old lady or old man.

"What are you looking at?" she would ask. "Do you see something I can't see?"

"That old lady," I said once. "She has so many wrinkles. Does that mean she knows all about Hamlet and where babies come from?"

"Yes," Mother said.

I envied old people and just counted the days for each birthday. One day I even lied about my age. I was seven years old and I told a guest I was twelve! "My, you have grown fast," she said.

"Is that Lydia hurrying to grow older?" Mother said as she came in.

Since I had to wait several years to hear the story of Macbeth, I joined some other children at the castle one day. It was a good place to play hide-and-seek. There was an opening between two sections of the castle. Legend had it that anyone who could go through this Headache Hole would never have a headache. It was practically impossible for an adult to go through this hole. Some of us children were able to get through quite comfortably, but one day while playing hide-and-seek, Olivia, a playmate my age, the daughter of one of the professors at St. Paul's, and I tried to hide there at the same time. It was not hard to find us—our screams brought all the children. No one could yank us out. Since the hole was not long enough for both of us, we had tried to hide side by side. The screams of the other children, added to ours, soon brought out all the adults in the neighborhood. Papa was the first to arrive, as usual.

He could always outwalk and outrun anyone. He asked one of us to creep backwards and the other one to try to creep forward. After what seemed hours we were rescued.

When the excitement was over and we were back to normal, Mother said, "If there were any ghosts there, those screams will surely wake them up."

"What are ghosts?" we wanted to know.

"It is one of those things I told you about," Mother said. "It will be more fun for you to read about when you are older than for me to tell you now."

"When will we be old enough?" one of us asked.

"You may ask me all the questions you want to," Mother said. "If I think you are not yet old enough to understand, I'll answer by giving you a number. That number will mean the age when you can understand the answer."

Our friends must have thought we were talking in code. So many times Mother would answer by just a number. Although we knew what it meant, others must have wondered.

Numroon seemed like a world set apart. There was no means of communication with Tarsus and the outside world. Only newcomers brought news of the war, but fortunately there were not many newcomers.

"Let's live a day at a time," Papa said.

He was happiest when he was in his garden. Although the estate Father had hired for the summer had what seemed like endless filbert and walnut trees and a fig grove, he had planted vegetables and flowers also. I can remember the filbert grove above all the others. The trees were so close together that even in midday the orchard looked dark.

Mother was still trying to help me overcome the fear of darkness. "You'll think of some way," her friends had said.

Most of our playmates were afraid of thunder and lightning. I cannot remember any time when we children were afraid of thunder and lightning. In fact, we always hoped for flashes of lightning and the rumble of the thunder claps.

"Count as soon as you see the flash," Papa would say. "Every five

counts between the flash and the thunder means the lightning is one mile away.”

Then we would play a game to see who could guess, right away, before starting to count, how many miles it was away. The person who guessed the nearest would get a prize or some other reward. Thunder and lightning were always welcome to us.

In spite of the dark filbert grove, I joined the other children there to play and climb trees. We could go from one tree to another without getting down because the filbert trees were so close together. We used to pick walnuts before the shells hardened, while they were still green. Mother used to soak them in lime water and make delicious preserves. When they were ready to be eaten, they would be jet black, soft, yet firm. It was delicious as a side dish with a meat course. I loved it for breakfast or at any time for dessert. The fig grove was my favorite. I wanted figs for breakfast, dinner, and supper, and between meals! Whenever I was missing, someone would be sent to the fig grove to find me.

At least once during each summer spent at Numroon a group of vacationists would take a day trip by horseback to the real Numroon mountains. Mother and Papa had planned to join the group this year. Tirzah teased to go also. She had learned to ride Brahms well. Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms were saddled and ready to join the group. Papa saw the great disappointment registered in my face and voice.

“She can ride with me,” he said.

I was overjoyed. I had already secretly been riding Brahms every chance I had. I was willing to ride in Papa’s lap on Bach. Even though I did not have my own horse, I experienced the first feeling of being grown up, to be allowed to join this adult group. One of the college boys promised Papa he would keep an eye on Tirzah and Brahms so off we went — about twenty or thirty in the party.

“Let’s forget the outside world for today,” one of the men in the group said.

As we descended to the valley and then ascended to the hills, Papa added, “I will look up onto the hills from whence cometh my help.” I was gradually beginning to learn that whenever an adult

quoted passages from the Bible or resignedly began to philosophize, outside news was reaching our summer haven.

"I hope 'that' will never happen," I had heard several people say during the last few days. I was trying to find out what "that" was. But today, as someone had said, we were to forget everything and live for the day. With each breath of mountain air, the day seemed more glorious. One of the men serving as guide said we would soon see bears. In Papa's arms a horde of lions could not have frightened me.

"God surely was the greatest artist of all time," Mother said, "and sometimes I wonder why, in the midst of His greatest masterpieces—the river, the woods, the mountains—He places animals instead of human beings."

Then she would answer her own question,

"Because, of course, they don't fight and destroy so much as human beings do. Even when the animals fight, they don't burn the trees or ruin the landscape."

Then she would say to Tirzah and me, "Count the different shades of green."

"First let's guess how many there are," Tirzah said.

Almost every game we played had a phase of guessing, it seemed. I was calling every color on the mountain top green but Tirzah was more accurate and would say, "That's not even green. There are browns and reds, too."

Then we would notice wild flowers of every color and shade. Once in a while one of the men would stop to pick a wild flower or a branch from a bush. We had a near catastrophe when he almost fell off a precipice in trying to pick a flower. When one of the ladies was critical of his foolhardiness, Mother defended him by saying, "After all, he is the botany teacher and one can hardly blame him for taking advantage of this opportunity."

Often our attention would be attracted because a cub would cross our path. Whenever we saw a cub, we would soon after see a bear. At one point our guide shot a bear. I began to cry.

"The noise of the gun must have frightened her," someone said.

"I think it was seeing the bear drop dead that frightened her," Mother said. "Maybe she should not have come."

I realized I had shown weakness and promised I would not cry again.

"You just absorb all the beauty you can," Mother said. "Watch all the things that are beautiful so that you can try to remember them later. Tomorrow I might ask you and Tirzah what you saw that was the most beautiful, and what next to that, and then what after that, and let's see how many beautiful things you will have seen in all."

"Mother, do you think there will be more beautiful things than green things?" Tirzah asked.

"See if you can keep track of all the different green things and the different beautiful things and let's see which one will be the higher count," Mother said.

"I think that's the most beautiful thing," Tirzah would say pointing at some object, and then would change her mind and say, "No, I think that is the second most beautiful. This one is more beautiful." And so a long ride seemed short.

Soon everyone was dismounting in a beautiful opening, with a stream flowing through a carpet of moss. Everyone was hungry. The lunch baskets were opened and many good things to eat were spread out. Some of the boys took off their shoes and stockings and went wading. Before anyone had noticed it, Tirzah had done the same. Then we heard her screaming. The fast running stream had whisked her off her feet and was now sweeping her rapidly down its course. With lightning rapidity, one of the boys jumped in with his horse and rescued her before everyone even realized what had happened. Tirzah was not even crying. I always envied her this dauntless quality. All she said was, "I think I got wet!"

Into what might have been a tragedy this remark injected a little humor. "That's one of the fastest streams in the country," someone said. "Fortunately the depth did not compare with its rapidity, otherwise the rescuing hero would have gone down with his horse also."

The word "hero" channeled the conversation into thoughts of romance. "Now you'll have to marry your hero," someone said.

"You're nine years old and he is eighteen," someone else added.

"That will never do," Papa chuckled. "Just think, when he is a

hundred years old, she'll be only ninety-one."

"I'm so glad we can laugh about it now," Mother said, "but can someone think of where we can find dry clothing for her?"

This indeed was a problem. The best that could be done was to roll her up in a blanket.

"But how can she ride her horse all rolled up in a blanket?" one of the ladies was quick to ask.

"She won't need a blanket if she rides as Lady Godiva," a brave young man chuckled.

"Who is Lady Godiva?" Tirzah and I both wanted to know. Before Mother had a chance to even give us a number, by the looks and tones of some of the ladies, we expected a number for the answer.

"Her hair is almost long enough," Papa laughed.

Tirzah had two long braids but we still did not understand the significance of all this joking. Before we could extract an answer to our question, someone suggested that since I was not riding a horse of my own, Tirzah might have all my clothes which would fit her and that I be wrapped up in a blanket. After a makeshift exchange, everyone settled down to a delicious picnic lunch.

Some of the men had built a fire and we could already smell the aroma of shish-kebab—lamb cut in small pieces and put through skewers with alternating pieces of whole tomatoes, peppers, onions, and eggplant. Cooked over an open fire, it could tempt the most jaded appetite.

"Ah," Papa would say, every time we had shish-kebab, definitely an outdoor dish," the man who invented the bed and the man who discovered the art of cooking are the world's greatest artists.

"God bless Charles Lamb and the 'Dissertation on Roast Pig,'" Mother said as she was trying to dry Tirzah's clothing.

"Who was Charles Lamb and what kind of dessert is roast pig?" Tirzah wanted to know.

This made everyone laugh.

"I can tell you that story next," Mother said.

Several people asked Mother to tell it to us now so they could enjoy it again and refresh their memories.

So while the shish-kebab was sizzling with the juices of the meat

and tomatoes dripping on the fire and tantalizing everyone, Mother told the story of “mankind, who for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal...” and how accidentally the art of cooking was discovered by the Chinese swineherd, Ho-ti, when he left his son, Bo-bo, at home. The boy played with fire, let some sparks escape and burned down the humble cottage. Ho-ti was not so concerned with the cottage, which burned often, but about the nine pigs inside. When he reached into the ashes and his hand touched something that burned his fingers, he stuck his fingers into his mouth to cool them off. And that was how he discovered how wonderful roast pig tasted.

By now we had eaten, the fire was extinguished, we all had a short nap, and could start riding again.

Tirzah’s hero kept a close eye on her, lest she might get Brahms into more trouble. I was a little concerned about my new costume and wondered who would see us arrive.

The return trip through another route unfolded new vistas of beauty and wonder.

“The sun is setting to remind us that our day, too, is ending,” Mother said.

Someone in the group then began to sing and everyone joined in:

Day is dying in the west,
Heaven is touching earth with rest.
Wait and worship while the night sets
Her evening lamps alight
Thro’ all the sky.

Then the sun gave way to the moon, and the stars—the evening lamps did alight through all the sky.

“The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament...” Papa began. I don’t remember the last lap of the journey. But half awakened while being put to bed, I remember Semma, excitedly trying to give Mother a message:

“...and he said the streets of Tarsus are full of them, women and children ...”

But soon I was again in the arms of Morpheus, succumbing to

"tired Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

In the morning I asked Mother what women and children were in the streets of Tarsus.

"We'll find out when we get there," she said. "Today you and Tirzah can be the teachers when you play and tell Cynthia and Nora all about yesterday and the beautiful colors of the trees, the mountains, and the sunset."

What I left out, Tirzah supplied. What we left out, Mother added.

"When I go, I'll have my own horse to ride," Cynthia said, knowing I had not had my own and covering up her disappointment in some measure for not having been allowed to go.

"Someday," Mother said, "we can all ride through the beautiful valleys and mountains in America."

It seemed centuries later, in another world, that I was riding through beautiful mountains, with cubs and bears running across our path, and the deer sticking their noses through our tents. But this time there was a greater calm, no fear of what tomorrow might bring.

"This," I said to myself, as we rode through the beautiful Yosemite Valley, "is Numroon duplicated." Here was God's same handiwork. But here I did not have to fear the tomorrow, listen to adults whisper, "I hope 'that' will never happen." Here I was among strangers, friendly tourists who, like me, had saved all year for their annual vacations. Here, after sunset, in the Valley, looking up at El Capitan, listening to the Indian Love Call, then the echo, then the firefalls, here was the New World whose history began with bloodshed for a just cause, here where also hardships were endured so that someday I, and a million like me, could ride through the beautiful Valley, ascend and descend mountain tops, without fear of the morrow. Then I could not help but think what Mother would have said had she been riding beside me. Here again the heavens were declaring the glory of God and the nations had found true brotherhood.

A few days after our eventful excursion to the mountains, I was again in Numroon playing atop a tree in the fig orchard when Tirzah came running.

"Mother wants us all to come in the house at once!"

I thought, "I wonder if 'that' is happening," although I did not yet know what 'that' was that everyone seemed to fear.

"Has 'that' happened?" I asked Mother as soon as we reached the house.

"What do you mean by 'that?'" Mother asked.

"She means what everybody whispers about," Tirzah said.

So Tirzah has noticed, too, I thought.

"No, dear," Mother said, "'that' is something else which we hope won't happen. But just now you watch the black sky and see it get blacker and don't get frightened. You will be safe in the house."

"We're not afraid of thunder and lightning," Cynthia reminded her.

"It is the locusts coming," Mother said. "Try to think of it as a lesson. Now I won't have to tell you the story about it. You can see it for yourselves."

"Are we old enough?" we asked.

"When you can see it, then God must think you are old enough," Mother said. "Nora may not remember this but maybe someday you can tell her all about it, so try to see what happens and after they come and go, we'll write down all the things that happened."

We were ready for our lesson of the locusts.

"The clouds are getting nearer and nearer," we said, for it seemed only a few minutes had elapsed since we came in the house. People were trying to pick all they could from their gardens and trees, but they had not had enough warning. Unless they found shelter before this new enemy arrived, the foe would descend on them as well as on the trees and gardens.

We closed all doors and windows but could hear the impact of their landing on the roof. Soon they were crawling on every exposed inch of the house and grounds. They were devouring the fruit of the land like ravenous lions. The grounds and trees were no longer green. The "black clouds" had landed like flying carpets and covered the ground.

This new enemy one could not meet with weapons. All the available guns and ammunition could not drive them back. Papa

watched his beautiful garden disappear in a few minutes. Hordes of marching men could not have caused greater damage. We watched helplessly these little, dangerous soldiers eat the gardens and the trees, and leave the earth barren.

When the "storm" had subsided and the enemy lay in stupor from overeating, the men went out to retaliate. But there would be no satisfaction in this retaliation. The fields were soon ablaze. There were no crops to save. This was the only way to stop the enemy from migrating again. When the signal for the new march was given, I am sure the casualty list of this enemy was greater than the surviving list, but upon their retreat, they left behind them a destroyed land and a discouraged people. "A war within a war," everyone said. This enemy did not show partiality. Christians and Turks alike suffered losses.



CHAPTER 3

Will “That” Happen?

The locusts' barren land hastened our return to the city. There was talk of St. Paul's College closing because the Armenian students were being drafted by the Turks to fight the Turks' enemies—who were the friends of the Armenians. To keep the school open, the trustees had compromised with the mayor of the city by admitting Turkish students and instructors. There were advantages and disadvantages to this new plan. Knowing one's fellow men brought about more understanding. The mayor's sons were admitted and Turkish was being taught as well as American. The mayor's daughters could not go out in public so he asked instructors to be sent to his home. Mother was selected to do this. She was to teach them “American” and to give piano lessons. This proved to be of great advantage to our family later.

The following summer we could not go far. Papa hired a vineyard outside the city that one reached by horseback in about one hour. It was not a resort like Numroon but was a little better than being in the city during the hot summer days. One day Mother and Papa had to go to the city on business, so we children were left alone with Semma and Partam. Partam was the hired man. He also did the shopping as ladies were not supposed to go shopping.

A few hours after Mother and Papa left, a Turkish gendarme came to the house and collected us all to take to the city—why we did not know. Semma was not articulate enough to be understood; she was too excited. Partam tried to reason with the gendarme but getting nowhere. Tirzah's Turkish was adequate enough, and she bravely asked,

"Why? We don't go anywhere without our parents' permission."

The gendarme laughed and said we were lucky we had any parents at all and maybe we would not have them for long. This made us all cry, except Tirzah and Partam. We had to walk all the way to the city in the hot sun while our "gentleman friend" rode haughtily on his horse. I think it made him very angry to hear us talk English amongst ourselves.

"What language are you speaking?" he said angrily.

"American," we chorused. We had been prepared for this.

"I did not know you were American," he said, wondering perhaps, if he had made a mistake and picked up the wrong family.

"We are going to be some day," Tirzah said in Turkish.

Partam tried to stop her from answering more questions. We began to get wise. Tirzah and I did not mind the walk so much, but Cynthia, and specially, Nora were too young. Semma took Cynthia by the hand and Partam carried Nora most of the way. At one point when the gendarme stopped to "rest" his horse, Partam put Nora down and said, "She wants to walk for a while."

We had not heard Nora say this as Nora could not yet speak more than a few words of Turkish, but there was always sign language, we thought.

When we reached the city, the gendarme noticed that Partam was missing. "Giaour! Where is that giaour?" [infidel Christian] he yelled.

"We don't know," we said honestly.

We, too, wondered where Partam had gone. Partam must have run off when we turned a corner. He probably was afraid so he ran away, we all thought. We were not angry with him. We were glad to see someone saved as we did not know what would happen to us.

"If only Mother and Papa were here," we thought, "we would not be so frightened."

Poor Nora began to limp without Partam's help to carry her. We had to leave so quickly that she had not had time to put on her shoes. The gendarme would not even wait for us to change our clothes. He frightened us with the butt of his gun. When the officer got impatient because Nora was holding us back, Tirzah said, "Why

don't you let her ride with you?"

We thought her so brave. I don't know whether the man was shamed into it (if such could be possible), but he did. We had heard Mother say something about there being something bad in the best of us and something good in the worst of us. This must be the something good in the worst!

Just before we turned a corner, the gendarme put Nora down and said, "We are almost there." Maybe he did not want to show his weakness in doing one kind deed.

We were taken before a magistrate. Apparently the court was in session. I had never seen a court before. Some of the men were dressed in business suits and some in shalvars—the full baggy trousers that most Turks still wore. Those who wore the regular business suits were considered "a la Franca." The French language and customs had been the first to reach Asia Minor, apparently. Many Turkish words were the same as French—gendarme, chemin de fer, tasse.

We thought we could understand Turkish but we could not understand too well the language of the Turkish courts. It seemed the "dignified" men sitting in judgment derived pleasure from seeing us frightened. One man kept asking questions. Tirzah tried to answer in Turkish but mixed it up with English. He addressed his remarks to Semma, thinking the adult person should do the talking. Semma was so frightened that her speech became even less intelligible than usual. Tirzah tried to explain that she had difficulty in talking. The man asked Tirzah why she talked English.

"We speak American," Tirzah answered. A few men laughed.

"Where are your parents?" the man asked.

"They are somewhere here in the city," Tirzah answered, "but I don't know just where."

"Why don't you know?" he asked angrily, but we saw him wink at someone. "Because I forgot to ask," Tirzah replied, and a few more people laughed.

"That man has a fly on his nose," Nora yelled.

Everyone did not laugh, because everyone did not know English, but we laughed and almost instantly fear left us. But the man who

was doing the talking became really angry. Apparently he was losing discipline. The man called Nora, "giaour."

"She cannot understand Turkish," Tirzah said, "and she does not know where this place is."

"Maybe she can understand a whipping," he said.

We were again beginning to be frightened, and Semma clutched Nora against her breast and told her, "Quiet be."

"My God," the man said, "does that woman speak English too?"

"Very little," Tirzah said, and we began to relax again.

The man then called the gendarme who had brought us and whispered something to him. Later Tirzah told us she could hear half of what he said. He had asked him if he brought everyone who was at the house, and the man had said yes. Maybe he was afraid to let them know he was careless and let someone get away from him.

We still did not know why we were there. It seemed we had been there for hours.

"I'm hungry!" Nora yelled again but this time the man did not get angry. I think he was hungry, too.

Suddenly there was a stir in the courtroom.

Papa walked in-like a general.

"I am here to take my children home," he said. "An injustice has been done. Here is a note for you from the mayor."

Without waiting for an answer, Papa gathered us and out we marched and got into an "araba" [a carriage] waiting for us.

We cried from excitement and joy of release.

"Papa, how did you know where we were?" we all wanted to know.

"Where do you think Partam disappeared?" he answered.

"We thought he was frightened and went to hide," we said.

"No, indeed," Papa said. "He is a very brave man."

He was a hero to us thereafter.

Mother was anxiously waiting for us at a friend's house. After Partam left us he had gone to several places where he thought Mother and Papa might be. As soon as he had explained what had happened and where we were, Mother said her heart sank. "Could it be our turn?" she thought.

Already some of our friends had been deported for no reason than the fact that they were Christians, especially Armenian Christians, the greatest crime against the Ottoman Empire.

"If it is our turn now," Mother and Papa had reasoned, "we do not have much more to lose."

Their only recourse was to see the mayor. Maybe because Mother was his daughter's teacher, he may "order" her to remain in the city. Mother and Papa had immediately gone to the mayor's house and asked if he knew why his children had been ordered before the magistrate while their parents were away from home. The mayor was not at home but his wife and daughters were very much concerned and immediately summoned a messenger to go to the mayor, who in turn had sent a "zabtieh" [an official document] to the Court House, asking to have us released. Apparently this message had reached the magistrate before Papa's arrival, otherwise, Papa thought afterwards, they would not have been so civil to him.

"Why did they do this to my children?" Father ranted and raved. "How did they know we were not with them today?"

No explanations were ever found but Papa and Mother thought it might have been done to test Mother's influence with the mayor's family so that future treatments of us would depend on the outcome of this experiment.

That summer we were not left alone again. Either Mother or Papa remained with us at all times. Partam became a good friend to us, but Mother and Papa feared for him in case the officer from whom he ran away should try revenge at a later date. They hoped that the fact he worked for Mother who worked for the Turkish mayor might help him.

We tried to have a peaceful summer away from the city. But there were rumors that "that might happen," and our unpleasant arrest on the street. There were increasing daily stories of exiled Christians and orphans passing through the city, starving and in rags. We were always anxious about the future and wondering what the next news from the city might be.

That summer Cynthia and I had each received a goat for our birthday. Although our birthdays were in the winter and had already

passed, we had a postponed birthday party. Papa had promised Cynthia a lamb for her birthday but because we did not have accommodations for it in the city, he had promised that she would have it when we went away for the summer. Since we generally received the same gifts because of our having the same birth date, I received a goat, too, even though I had not asked for one. One goat was black and one was white. We both wanted the white. It was decided to toss a coin to decide. Cynthia got the white goat.

Naming the goats was the next exciting event. Mother finally suggested "Bo-bo" and "Ho-ti" after the character in the story she had told us about Charles Lamb's "Dissertation on Roast Pig." The next argument was that we both liked the name "Bo-bo" better than "Ho-ti." Since Cynthia's lamb was smaller and since Bo-bo in the story was younger, it was suggested that Cynthia's lamb be named Bo-bo and mine, Ho-ti. I think Mother must have sensed that I was losing interest in my "black sheep." She decided that since Cynthia received the goat she wanted, I should give mine the name I wanted.

"I think that's the fairest way to settle it," Mother said with finality.

Ho-ti and Bo-bo did not get along well at all. Bo-bo was the milder of the two and Ho-ti took advantage of this. Cynthia wanted to ride her goat every day. Mother had a hard time trying to impress her that one did not ride goats like horses or donkeys and made her promise she would not ride her Ho-ti again.

One day Cynthia did not show up for lunch. Everyone looked for her around the house and the trees near the house but there was no sign of her. Then we discovered Bo-bo was missing too. We extended our search farther away towards the corn field. There was Cynthia riding Bo-bo up and down the field! Mother looked at her severely and Cynthia knew what she meant.

"But I promised not to ride Ho-ti," Cynthia replied!

The next day we discovered that Bo-bo was limping. She had broken her leg. Cynthia began to cry, knowing full well that she would be blamed for having ridden her.

Papa said since we would soon be going back to the city we

would have to sell Bo-bo and Ho-ti. We never did find out whether or not they were sold or if they were served to us as shish-kebab. We may have had "Dessertation on Roast Lamb."

A few days before we packed to go back to the city for the opening of college, we set the table under an apricot tree, as we did every pleasant evening.

We sat down to supper and Papa began to say our regular grace and came to the words, "We thank Thee, dear Lord, from Whom all blessings flow."

Not only did apricots from the apricot tree come down on each plate, but also peaches, pears, and apples. I am sure that all eyes must have opened before the "Amen" when we heard "the blessings" flowing.

Tirzah and I had wanted to do this all summer, but we knew we couldn't hide in the tree because Papa would never start a meal until everyone was present. Papa would count heads and check empty chairs. So we had planned this "blessing" with a colleague's son who was a playmate and lived not far from our summer vineyard. Maybe he was missing from his own supper table that evening but he was showering us with blessings from heaven.

"Manna from heaven!" Tirzah and I chorused, trying to show surprise and also our knowledge of the Bible. We hoped Mother and Papa would not think this sacrilegious. We were relieved when, at the end of grace, they, too, smiled.

Mother said, "I wonder if the angel who sent us these blessings is hungry? If so, I hope he will come and join us. Angel, come down and join us." Apparently he not only was an obedient angel but also a hungry one, because he came right down and shared in the merriment and the "blessings."

It had been a summer mixed with joy and anxiety, gay evenings and one very sad evening—the day Mother was bitten by a scorpion. Fortunately, Papa knew just what to do. He was prepared for such an emergency. We had been warned to be careful whenever we picked up objects from the ground or under pieces of boards or stones.

Mother was ill for several days. Nothing seemed worse than

having Mother ill. The house just did not function. All gaiety seemed false.

"If only it had been I instead of Mother," one of us would say.

Papa had studied medicine at one time during his college course and seemed adept at playing the doctor. He had even vaccinated everyone of us. People who were vaccinated were in the minority. When we had all lined up to be vaccinated and proudly displayed our left arm taped, "I suppose that's what they do in America," one of the ladies had said.

"Of course," Mother had replied, pretending not to notice any note of sarcasm. "Aram will be very glad to vaccinate your children too, if you wish."

Later she said to us about the lady's sarcasm, "If you don't want to be hurt with a sharp arrow, pretend that you don't know it is an arrow and return it with an offer of help."

Often the "returned arrow" actually was accompanied by help in this case, because Papa had vaccinated the children of many of his friends. It was not always easy to get the services of a doctor, specially during this war. Armenian doctors were having difficulty in being allowed to carry on their work and Armenians were afraid to send for a Turkish doctor as rumors were rampant that with Armenian patients, Turkish doctors were substituting poison for medicine.

Very soon after Mother recovered from her scorpion bite, Papa was bitten. He practically doctored himself, with help from Mother. We expected Papa to be confined to bed also but he would not give in, although we watched his face and knew he must be suffering. His hand swelled and Mother was worried but Papa said what was a scorpion bite compared to other forms of suffering. He did not even cry. Mother had cried with the agonizing pain, but we had never seen Papa cry, although we had seen other men cry. Once or twice that summer people we did not know had stopped to see Papa and they had been crying when they arrived and talked in hushed tones.

We were beginning to hear the word "Der-el-Zor."

"It must be a terrible word," we thought because whenever it

was mentioned, somebody always cried. In the year to come, it was a word we would soon hear all too often.

A few days before we packed to return to Tarsus, it was my turn to be on the accident list. When Mother heard me scream, she shouted, "I hope not a scorpion," and ran to find me.

All summer I had wanted to use mother's sewing machine but had not been allowed to do so.

"You are too young yet," Mother had said. "As soon as you are old enough, I'll teach you."

But sometimes the growing process seemed too slow and while Semma was busy packing in one room and Mother in another room, I had sneaked to a room upstairs where the machine was open with some sewing half done. Not knowing just how to manipulate it, I had managed to get my middle finger under the needle. How I could have operated several parts at the same time I don't know, but all I remember is sewing over my finger. With the help of iodine, bandages, an audience, and even some sympathy in the light of a disobedient act, I calmed down.

"She'll lose the nail," Papa said, "but she won't need any stitches."

Then he asked for guesses as to how long it would take for the nail to grow back. It was another accident turned into a game.

"I suppose I won't find out what happened to Hansel and Gretel," I asked Mother, thinking this would be my punishment for having disobeyed her. Hansel and Gretel were lost in the woods in the part of the story the night before. I could hardly wait for evening to find what happened to them.

"I know you won't do it again," Mother said, "and you have already punished yourself."

When we returned to Tarsus, it seemed the streets were full of beggars in rags. The impoverished Armenians did not dare go out begging, so these were Turks, victims of their own government. Many Turks had suffered from the war also. Armenians who were the skilled tradesmen had been deported, their businesses left behind, but even the enemy could not benefit from the spoils. There were not enough skilled Turks who were artisans and craftsmen. These were wartime days when even more skilled workers were

needed, but the government was killing the source of help. The poor Turks who worked for the skilled Armenians were now left without work, and those who were of no help in the Turkish Army were roaming the streets, begging, with less sympathy from their own people than from their so-called enemies.

It has often been said that Germany became the ally of Turkey because she had her eyes on the Dardenelles, one of the most valuable economic and strategic waterways in Turkey. When Germany's real enemies had been fought, she knew she could then turn on her Turkish ally and take the spoils, not share them. But she knew that she must first exterminate the Armenians. Without the "interference" of the Armenian faction in Turkey, Germany knew she could do it more easily. Her aim was to control from "Berlin to Baghdad" and the Turks probably interpreted this as helping them exterminate Armenians from "Berlin to Baghdad."

But Germany was thinking of the extension of her Empire from "Berlin to Baghdad." She had her eyes on the Dardenelles. The Turks, in their insatiable lust for the blood of Armenians and other Christians, had welcomed any ally who would help them with the extermination of their arch enemy. They must have realized that their so-called ally was also a supposedly Christian nation, but they were in a hurry for this mass murder and did not stop to think of ulterior motives or long range plans.

Now in the streets of Tarsus there were destitute Armenians, exiles on forced march to the dreaded "Der-el-Zor"—the Mesopotamian deserts, where Armenians would perish for their sin of being Christians. But on the streets, too, were Turkish beggars.

Already word was reaching the people of Tarsus that a great massacre had begun in the vilayet (district) of Van. Jevdet Bey, Governor-General of Van was as cruel and as devoid of scruples as his brother-in-law, the Turkish War Minister in Constantinople, Enver Pasha.

Enver Pasha had planned the massacre to begin on April 19. He personally invited prominent Armenian intellectuals for a friendly meeting of peace. The Armenians were making every effort to foster peace and save lives. They had gone to him trustingly. He had a feast

prepared for them—where they were the piece de resistance. They were murdered in cold blood at the banquet.

"April 19," Mother had sighed, "an important date in American history," a date about which we were to learn more if and when we reached "home" in America.

[My mother's knowledge of United States history was correct. April 19 is not a major holiday in the country at large, but it is traditionally noted in many New England towns as "The Battle of Concord and Lexington" in the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775. I suspect that my mother knew this through her American missionary teachers, most of them from Boston and other nearby towns in Massachusetts. BHB]

"What a coincidence, or should I say, irony," she had said. "And there in Van, are Dr. Clarence Ussher, and his American Hospital, caring for Turks as well as Armenians. And there, also, is Miss E. Gertrude Rogers, bringing help to the needy in a country that massacred her brother. They were being deprived of comforts and peace of mind, suffering voluntarily in order to make life easier for those who were destined to suffer."

The missionary spirit is indeed a noble one.

In the Van Vilayet and other vilayets throughout Turkey there were American as well as German missionaries. The German missionaries, true Christians, abhorred the deeds of their government. They risked their lives when they protected the orphans in their charge. They were asked by their own government to turn the Armenian parents and their teachers into the streets. The German missionaries were unwilling to do this and pleaded with their government which not only condoned but also instigated officers to kill the children. Many of these German missionary young women were ashamed of their countrymen who were no better than the Turks. Yet these good missionaries and these cruel officers were of the same stock, country, and religion, the latter in name only. Many of the German missionaries chose to go the American hospitals and orphanages to help rather than go home to comparative safety.

Americans did not escape insult or injury, although they should

have been safe in a country where they had extra-territorial treaty rights. America was not yet at war. The Capitulations had not been abolished. But when hysteria begins and bullets start flying, all targets are vulnerable.

[In the 19th century the United States and almost every European power insisted on Capitulations in Turkey, meaning that those outside countries had been granted the right to protect any of their citizens who happened to be in Turkey. BHB]

Although many Armenians from Tarsus had been conscripted and their families exiled, our family had not yet met that fate. St. Paul's College was still open because America was still neutral. Although social gatherings at our house and elsewhere among faculty members were rare now, whenever a few managed to get together, the topic always seemed to be, "How long can America stay out of it?" What would happen to Dr. Christy and his family, the American members of the faculty if "that" should happen?

"I don't see how she can stay out of it much longer," Papa said about America entering the war. He and Mother would remain long hours at college visiting the Christys and reading all the papers from America.

"I have great faith in President Wilson," Papa would say. "He is a real humanitarian."

"Of course," Dr. Christy had said, chuckling, one day. "He has to be. He was a college president, you know," and everyone had laughed.

When college opened, our tutorial group of three had increased. We now had a Turkish girl of about thirteen or fourteen and her brother, Ahmet, about six years younger. Although she was twice as old as we, her uncle wanted her to go to school with us. He wanted her to learn English. She could already speak a little, but very little. They had just come from Constantinople with their uncle. The uncle was a general in the Turkish army and had just been assigned to the coastal vilayet. They were living in "the palace" as everyone called the beautiful white marble house whose interior only a very few people in the city had ever seen. It towered above all the other buildings in the city.

I don't know who lived there before Fatima and her uncle came to the city. I had always wondered what it looked like in the inside and my curiosity was soon satisfied. Tirzah, Minor Rogers and I were invited to her house to "play" one day after class. Her uncle's carriage came to call for her as usual, but this time instead of Fatima and her brother, there were five of us. We crowded into the carriage and were driven to "the palace," although it was so near the college that it would have been simple to walk there. However, it seemed even more special to ride there in a carriage with a footman.

Fatima announced as soon as we were in the carriage that her uncle had left orders that we were to speak only English. I don't know what was in the lower stories of this house. All we could see as we entered the house was a very long and narrow stairway, in white marble. It was fun for us to climb the endless steps, but as I look back I wonder how the older folks felt about it. There were no elevators. The only one to meet us when we arrived upstairs was a woman we soon found out was not her mother. We never did know who she was, but she was treated like the housekeeper.

Apparently Fatima and her brother were living with their uncle because their parents were dead. Fatima had black hair and green eyes and was very attractive and, we thought, very sophisticated. She seemed to be the lady of the house.

The stairway ended in a large reception hall. On the right of the reception hall were windows facing the street. We were so high above the street that it made me dizzy to look down. Looking from the stairway landing we could see the kitchen through an open doorway. It was the most modern kitchen I had seen at that point in my life. Then there was one closed door next to the kitchen. To the left of the stairway were French doors leading to the parlor, the largest parlor room I had ever seen. All the floors in the house were of white marble.

The living room was the most beautiful room I had ever seen. I used to think Dr. Christy's apartment, the Turkish mayor's house, and the house of the richest man in the city, a Mr. Shalvarjian who owned one of the largest flour mills in the country, were very beautiful. But this was even more sumptuous.

There was an ivory grand piano. Fatima could play well. Apparently she had lived a life of luxury in Constantinople. Several doors from the parlor led to bedrooms. Fatima must have known we were curious because she showed us everything, even though we did not ask any questions. Her uncle's room was beautifully furnished. She had her own room, her brother had his own room, and there were several other bedrooms, but she did not say who used them. Minor and Ahmet were busy with something that did not interest us, and we heard Minor speaking Turkish and thought maybe he shouldn't but he didn't seem to care. Tirzah and I talked English with Fatima.

She showed us her Turkish books as well as her English books. She could read better than we could. We had not even seen some of the English books she had. Then she showed us how she could read and write in Turkish and we were fascinated to see anyone so young write Turkish so fast, from right to left. They were the funniest characters, we thought. Mother and Papa could read and write Turkish, too, and we had often watched them. It looked so funny to write backwards. But Fatima was so young and she seemed to know so much more than other girls her age. After we had played for a while the "lady" brought us cakes and "dondurma," (ice cream) but we never heard the lady speak at all. Then when it was time to go home, the carriage took us back to college where Mother and Papa were waiting for us.

We had much to tell them on the way home. And we talked about it all evening. Cynthia cried because she had not gone. Mother said she really was getting to be old enough, too, and that maybe she could start going to school with us. We took her the next day. The teacher tried to keep her busy by giving her colored paper, scissors, thread and needle and showed her how to make streamers. When it was time for recess, she tried to drop everything on the table but found she had sewn all streamers onto her dress! When we all laughed, she began to cry. She was not too happy on her first day in school. She did not go to school again for a while. Mother said she would start to teach her at home, and that she could join us later.

The only joyful incident in these days of fear and apprehension was the marriage of Minor's mother to one of the American professors at the college, Dr. Nute. She was to be married in a ceremony in the garden where most of our school days were spent.

Our studies were distracted during the preparations for the wedding. Carpenters were busy building a platform in the middle of the garden. Settees and chairs were being placed in circular formation so all guests could see the platform in the center of the garden.

Tirzah and I were excited to be flower girls. We were excited about the new dresses that were being made for us. A man came to the college with several bolts of material. Mrs. Rogers and Mother decided on the color and material and a woman came to take measurements. The dresses were blue and made alike. Mrs. Rogers wanted Minor to take part in the wedding too, so he was the flower boy.

It was a beautiful sunny April day on the day of the wedding. Minor was dressed in what must have been a Lord Fauntleroy suit. We carried large baskets with rose petals. Mrs. Rogers looked beautiful in her beige dress and picture hat. We preceded her down the wide marble steps, throwing rose petals as we were instructed. The garden was full of dignitaries. Outside the garden it seemed the entire student body was lined up on the college campus. I thought I was in fairyland, and I felt like a princess descending those beautiful steps, much more beautiful than the narrow, endless steps in the general's palace. He was there too, with Fatima and Ahmed. It was the first time we had seen Rozin Bey. The mayor and his family were there.

The Shalvarjian girls were present, too. They were always the most beautifully dressed. They had gone to school in Adana and then the older ones had been sent to Paris. They were the only ones in the city with a car. The chauffeur had to be imported with the car as nobody knew how to drive an automobile. It was an open car. I never saw it with the top up but maybe it could be lifted up. It seemed more spectacular with the top down as more people could gaze at this miracle and the beautiful girls inside.

"Now Minor has a father again," we said when we got home. "Will he be 'Minor Nute now?'"

"No, but you must remember to call his mother 'Mrs. Nute' now," Mother said. "Dr. Nute is a very fine man and even though he will be Minor's new father, Minor won't change his name because boys never change their names."

"If Minor had a sister, would she change her name to 'Nute'?" Tirzah asked.

"How do they think up all these questions?" Papa said, but seemed to enjoy the conversation.

"Girls change their names when they get married," Mother said. "Minor's mother is the only one married now so she is the only one who changed her name." Maybe Mother was glad that before more questions came, neighbors dropped in to see our dresses. We kept our baskets, although we had scattered all the rose petals.

A few days later the dressmaker came to our house and took measurements of Mother, Cynthia, and Nora. Mother had bought the whole bolt of cloth and was having dresses made for the rest of the family. "All except Papa," we said. After the dresses were all made, we wore them to church, all dressed alike. "America must be coming to Tarsus," someone had said.

"I don't know if that's the style in America," Mother had said, "but it is fine material and should last us a long time. Goodness knows when we'll have another chance to think of clothes."

Although there seemed to be a slight lull in the bad news around us, maybe because we were all busy with the distraction of the wedding, nevertheless, we did not forget that the war was really going on. The thought uppermost in most people's mind still was, "What will happen to us all if America enters the war?" Everyone agreed the final outcome as a result would be to the benefit of the Allies, but what about its effect on local politics?

What would happen here if "that" happened?



CHAPTER 4

“That” Happens

Joyous events were short-lived. “That” had happened! America was at war, too. Now we could not even say we spoke “American.”

It was a tense day at school. Students were asked to go directly home. Dr. Christy could not be responsible now for his charges. No orders had come yet. But surely the Capitulations would now be abrogated. Now what would happen to the foreign faculty members? The Armenians knew what their fate would be, but what of the others?

“I knew America would come to the aid of the Allies,” Papa had said. “That’s the only way to save the world. Neutral friends are useless friends. Even the Bible says so.” And he had quoted from the third chapter of Revelation:

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot.”

The college closed. Armenian instructors and students were conscripted for the Turkish Army. By paying a conscription fee, they could be released and many of them did so. After they had paid, however, they were still forced into the army or placed in factories. The Turks in Tarsus had learned a few lessons. Because all the Armenians in Van, Erzurum, and other more interior sections had been massacred, production had come to a standstill and the Turkish Army had no source of supply of food or materiel. So, a few of the skilled Armenian technical workers in Tarsus were therefore spared for the time being in order to be placed in defense work.

Again, Mother’s friendship (or maybe “usefulness” would be the more accurate term) with the Mayor’s family saved us from at least

immediate danger. Papa was drafted to be superintendent of the largest flour mill in that area. The factory was owned by a wealthy Armenian, a Mr. Shalvarjian, friends of Mother and Papa. The Turkish government took control of the entire factory but retained the owners to work for them because without their skill, there could be no production. The factory was on the outskirts of the city, getting its electrical power from a great waterfall near which the factory had been built. All the mechanics and machinists were Armenians. Even some of the ignorant Turkish leaders knew that if these men were conscripted or deported or massacred there would be no production.

While many of our friends were exiled or in hiding, we were living comfortably, but saddened by the fate of the less fortunate. Mother continued teaching the Mayor's daughters English and piano.

"My children have to be careful not to be heard speaking English," she would say, "but I am saving their lives by teaching the enemy English!"

Papa was receiving a much higher salary than he received as a professor at St. Paul's College. Mother and Papa wondered how long such luck could last.

A messenger brought a letter to Mother one day. Mother turned white. Papa rushed to look over her shoulder.

"We have not all been spared," Mother said. Aunt Paypee was among the hundreds passing through the city who are being deported-exiled to die in the desert.

"I must see her," Mother said.

Aunt Paypee was Mother's beautiful red-haired cousin. A wealthy Turk in Marash wanted to marry her so had her husband and children killed. Aunt Paypee had run away from him, was captured, and was now to pay the penalty.

"If the authorities know you are related to her," Papa said, "you will be in danger also."

"I will find a way," Mother said.

Apparently Mother found a way, most likely through the Mayor, because she did go to see Aunt Paypee. She took Tirzah and me with

her. Lately it seemed wherever she went, Tirzah and I went also. We were very glad about this but never really did find out why. We knew why we often went to the Mayor's house with her. It was because her pupils wanted to practice their English on us. Why she took us to some of the other places she said she would tell us later.

Often I have wished I had never gone to see Aunt Paypee. She was as beautiful as everyone said, but when I saw her in the building where hundreds of Christians had been corralled like animals ready for the slaughter, she seemed to be in a daze. All we could hear her say was, yes or no. She seemed to gaze into the distance. Maybe she felt, "What else is there to fear?" There were no more loved ones to protect or for whom to save herself. The only thing the future held was death, physical death—a worse death she had already suffered. When one has reached the depths of despair, what else is there to fear? Physical pain and torture which were the only things left in store for these people might at least push aside their mental anguish, release from which now was impossible. They seemed reconciled to their obvious fate.

Here and there in the crowd we could see someone reading a Bible, sometimes silently, sometimes audibly, once in a while hysterically. One old lady kept saying, with the Bible open in her hand, "O Lord, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Others could be heard saying, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do." A Turkish guard snatched a Bible from an old woman, tore it in her presence, swore, but overlooked a few others who were praying. He came towards us, maybe realizing that we looked too well dressed or nourished to be part of this group. Before he reached us, another guard stopped him. They both looked at us, mumbled, and went to another part of the huge room.

"That man keeps looking at us," Tirzah said to Mother.

"Don't pay any attention to the guards," Mother warned us. "If they ask any questions don't try to answer. Just stay close to me." We always felt safe when Mother was with us. We had not yet learned how to worry or feel insecure.

The only time Aunt Paypee really talked was when Mother showed her the bundle of clothes and food she had brought.

"Why should I take it?" she said, "when it will be taken away from me as soon as you leave. The guards take everything away from us. And the food you have brought — how can I eat it with all those people looking at me while they are starving? All the food and clothing that the Armenian people of Tarsus brought us yesterday were taken away from us."

"Just keep these things near you," Mother said, "and maybe when the babies and children begin to cry you may want to give something to them. We'll take a chance on the guards overlooking a few people and making a mistake sometimes."

So we did not take back anything, hoping Aunt Paypee would try to eat.

Lately it seems all I overheard grownups talking about was the terrible torture of hunger, the worst form of death. Then again, someone would say, no, to die of thirst was even worse.

The word "Der-El-Zor" continued to be a dreaded sound. It was in Syria where most of the Armenians from this section were being sent. Those who were fortunate met their death before reaching the desert. When husbands were taken away from their families, lined up and shot in the presence of their wives and children, many of the wives would become hysterical and scream. Then the guards would take the babies away from them, pierce the sword through their hearts or behead them. And what of the women? There was further sport for these Turkish savages. The women would be stripped and would be forced to march stark naked. When they were forced to march through villages or cities, even some of the Turks had been known to cry, "Shame!" and throw clothing on these women who had been the victims of bestial lust.

Stories were reaching us that so often when a particular group became a little difficult to handle, German soldiers and officers were sent to join the Turks to discipline these giaours, these infidel Christians. And who was the God of these so-called Germans? If the Turks were fighting Christianity, whom were the Germans fighting? Had the Turks taught them the art of bastinado [a beating with stick or iron rod, usually on the soles of the feet], or were the Germans the perpetrators of these crimes? Whatever they did, they seemed to

do it better than the Turks.

Feeble men who had been spared from conscription were paying for the sins of their years by being the victims of this form of torture. When they could no longer walk, "We'll give you a reason for not being able to walk," the Turkish and German soldiers would say, and would apply their sticks.

Parents with beautiful daughters had another form of fear. The less attractive ones met death sooner. The beautiful ones were torn away from their families, outraged, or forced to marry their captors. By renouncing their faith, they could have saved themselves but rare indeed were cases who wanted to be saved under these circumstances. Thousands submitted to death rather than to forced apostasy.

These and many tales of horror we had heard before going to visit Aunt Paypee, so we knew what she had suffered and what was yet to come. We had heard only a few days ago the horrible accounts related by a young woman who had escaped miraculously and was hiding in the home of friends. Some kind Turkish neighbors kept the secret of their Christian neighbors.

"I know they should not hear all these horrible tales," Mother had said but whenever she and Papa went anywhere, they felt safer to take us with them. "If some day we should meet the horrible fate others are now suffering, let us be together," she had said, knowing full well that once we had been separated, there would be little chance of ever being united again.

I remember trying to keep awake in order to overhear the grownups in the next room, then succumbing to sleep and waking up the next morning, but remembering some of the things that had been said the night before. Was it real or had I dreamed it? Looking at Mother's and Papa's faces would answer my question.

Yes, it had been real, that woman they were talking about who was hiding. They had killed her husband and, piercing his head through the sword, had waved the sword, shouting, "Here is your John the Baptist!"

They had driven the women and children to the banks of the Euphrates River, crowded them onto barges, and thrown thousands

overboard, shooting those who tried to swim and escape. As the road to the Euphrates had been saturated with the blood of the men, so now were the waters of the Euphrates with the blood of the women and children.

"You may want to know why I wanted to save myself when my husband and children were all killed," the woman had said. "But through the panic of shouting and horrible cries of the people as they were pushed overboard, I seemed to hear a voice say 'You must save yourself and escape and let the world know what is going on,' and someone seemed to push me on to safety. I knew that not many could swim and thought there must have been a reason for my being a good swimmer. I knew my sorrow would be assuaged only when I had joined my dear ones above. Fear had left me. I only knew that I must save myself. I must reach safety. I must tell someone what I had seen so that the world would not let such a thing happen again. I hid under a bridge until I had the shelter of night. Then I began to swim. The dead bodies around me seemed to say, 'Go on, go on, save the rest of the world. You must not die yet. You have a mission.'"

The tears that had been shed upon hearing her story had not been just Christian tears. A few Turks who were anxious to hear it also had cried, not only from pity but also from shame. Her mission carried out, the lady, only in her twenties, had died peacefully, not in a watery grave like her children, not decapitated like her husband, but among friends. That, at least, was her last reward on this earth.

"Mother, why did they tie everybody together before they burned them?" Tirzah had asked one day following another session we had attended. So, I had heard it right. Mother thought we were sleep in the next room and could not hear.

"We mustn't take them with us anymore," Papa had said.

"But I won't go anywhere unless we all go," Mother had said. She wanted to hear everything. She, too, had a mission to perform some day. She must get all the facts.

When Mother had gone to see Aunt Paypee, she had taken only Tirzah and me. Papa had stayed at home with Nora and Cynthia. It was Saturday and the Sabbath of the Turks. Father did not work on

that day. He had to work on Sundays. He had been relieved when we returned. He had sent Partam to follow us just in case anything happened. Ordinarily, Mother was safe when she went out to teach the Kaimakam's daughters because his carriage came for her. She had not been out on her own for a long time, probably not since America declared war.

"Everything America does is affecting us already," Mother had said. "I wonder if the Americans know the far-reaching effects of all their policies and principles. How good that God has brought to America not only right but also might."

Mother told Papa about Aunt Paypee and all those destitute people in a comatose condition, now devoid of all feeling and fear. When one has lost everything and the worst has happened, what else is there to fear? When one is drowning, does it matter whether it is in water six feet deep or sixty? The only thing these banished people now feared was life. Death was their only recourse to faith and salvation?

I can still see Aunt Paypee's face — sad, calm, ready to meet whatever fate was yet in store for her. Did they allow her to keep the food and clothing we left her? Did she become the victim of bestial lust? Did she suffer further physical and mental torture? Or worst still, did she reach Der-el-Zor and die a slow death in this dreaded desert? It would have been cruel to pray for her survival under these circumstances. In the nadir of despair, how sweet must be death—the great equalizer. We never heard from Aunt Paypee again.

We were living in precarious times, our very lives depending on the whims of our conquerors. Materially we were better off than when Papa was teaching. He was receiving a very high salary as superintendent of a factory strategically located, upon the success of which depended the daily bread of the Turkish army. Papa could have been forced to work without pay, but for the time being he was very well paid. Most of the men workers in the factory were Armenians and would do their best for Father, an Armenian, rather than a Turk, even if a Turk capable of handling the work could be found. When there was a shortage of wheat, Papa was promised

extra bonuses and commission if he could make the Armenian wheat growers sell wheat to the Turkish government.

The government knew very well that the Armenian wheat farmers would rather burn their crops than sell it to the government. The government did not even have to pay for it; they could have taken it. But if that had been the case, the shrewd farmers who had been spared from execution would have found a way of destroying their crops or not growing any. Papa had bargained with the Turkish officials to give these farmers their due share of profit but a certain of their own wheat. This enabled the Armenians and wheat growers to get in return some flour for their own daily bread, and stay alive.

Both sides profited from this arrangement. Papa was surprised to receive the bonuses and commission and was promised more money than he ever had in his life. There were not even any banks where he could safely put his money. He converted it to gold and valuable jewelry and Mother sewed them into our most inconspicuous clothing.

"For America," she would say.

Mother did not receive any remuneration for her services as teacher to the daughter and wife of the Kaimakam. No agreement was made when she was asked to do this. They just seemed to take it for granted that it was their right to engage her services. She did not need the money and to have our safety insured was worth much more than any money she could have received. However, on special Turkish "buyrams" (holidays), gifts from the Kaimakam would arrive at our house.

"Just to remind us that it is a Turkish holiday," Mother would say, "but never mind as long as it will save us until the day of reckoning."

After America had entered the war, we were more optimistic that the Allies would win.

Bi-monthly "teas" were held in the garden of the huge flour plant. A catwalk had been built across a narrow section of the falls from which the mill received its power. Overlooking the falls was a huge veranda. Beautiful potted plants had been brought here to give it

the effect of a garden. From one side of the veranda we could watch the huge falls, the water passing under the veranda to a watermill where the electrical power was generated for the factory. Looking down from this "garden" one could see the entire span of the falls and the mill below. All government officials were entertained here. On special occasions the potted plants were supplemented with beautiful cut flowers, making this spot a veritable paradise.

I don't know what revenue the Shalvarjian family received during the time the Turkish government controlled their business, but male members of the family could be seen on the premises every day. It was understood by everyone that it was not because of any sense of justice that they were allowed to take part in the running of their own business. They and their original corps of workers were needed. When machinery went out of order, the skilled members of this family had to be on hand. Their skill, at least, saved them and their families from the dreaded fate of many other Armenians of Tarsus.

Mr. Shalvarjian had beautiful daughters who had studied in Paris. They were respected for their culture and wealth. They were leaders, therefore, in the Armenian social life of the city. The only "official" social life in the city was, of course, among the wealthy Turks and the families of the military personnel. Mother taught the Shalvarjian girls piano and English, so whenever the Turkish ladies had a tea in this garden over the falls, Mother was invited and was asked to bring the children. We were the only children at these teas.

"To suit their needs and fancy," Papa had remarked. It seemed these Turkish ladies wanted to practice their English on us. No wonder we got so much attention in a group of the best dressed and sophisticated ladies in the city. Tirzah was only ten years old and the rest of us even younger. We didn't know and didn't mind being their guinea pigs. We just knew we loved to go to this beautiful place and eat all kinds of fancy cakes and see beautiful clothes. And it was exciting to walk to this garden by the catwalk. We could almost touch the water.

One evening Papa did not come home for supper. Mother was getting anxious but tried to put on a brave front. She called Partam

and asked him to try to find out what had happened. She warned him not to go among people he did not know. In the meantime, she made us eat our supper and go to bed. We tried to keep awake, listening for footsteps and voices. Mother came to assure us that everything would be all right and that we should go to sleep. Most likely Papa had to work late. There were only one or two telephones in the city, and they were controlled by army officials, so we would just have to wait until morning.

When we woke up in the morning, we soon realized that something was wrong. Mother was crying and a few friends had come to console her. But no one knew yet where Papa had disappeared. Mr. Shalvarjian came to the house but we could not understand anything he and Mother said. They were whispering in Armenian. If only they would talk Turkish, we could understand, but apparently they did not want us to understand. After Mr. Shalvarjian left, Mother began to talk with Partam. Partam did not know Armenian so they were talking in Turkish. Now we could get the gist of the conversation:

Papa was missing.

Nobody knew where Papa was, but Mother suspected foul play.

"That officer," we heard her tell Partam during the day, "had threatened Aram again a few days ago."

It seemed a long day. Mother did not want to leave us when she went to the Kaimakam's house, so when the carriage came for her, she took us all with her.

"If Papa has enemies," she had said, "they will try to get his family next."

Although the Kaimakam's family was surprised to see us all, they began to carry on their lessons with us while Mother talked to the Mayor. Apparently he did not know anything about Papa's disappearance, but assured Mother he would try to help. On the way back, Mother asked the "arabaju" (the driver of the carriage) to stop at a friend's house, a very influential Turk, and a close friend of Papa. She asked him for help and he offered to do something immediately.

On the second evening without Papa, he had not been at the

factory either. His horse, Beethoven, abandoned by his rider, had made such a fuss all evening that he had attracted the attention of the workers. Beethoven had a special stall where he stayed when Papa was at work. The factory, on the outskirts of the city, was quite a distance away from our house, so Papa rode Beethoven there every day. Beethoven had missed Papa almost as much as we had. The night workers had a hard time calming him. He seemed to know, too, that something was wrong with his master.

The days seemed to get longer and the nights more terrifying. Had someone killed Papa?

Papa had last been seen with the officer whom Mother suspected. The officer said yes, he had seen him at the time in question, but he did not know where he was now. He mentioned that Papa had casually remarked that most likely he would be conscripted for the army. Mother became even more suspicious after this remark. Papa had never mentioned such a thing to Mother. She knew that he would not have tried to spare her feelings this way because he would have had to make plans for our safety. Nothing had been said about replacing him.

On the evening of the third day of Papa's disappearance, Mr. Shalvarjian came again.

"I think you know what I know," Mother had said to him.

"In that case," Mr. Shalvarjian had said, "he should have been more discreet."

"You know Aram would not do anything dishonest even if it meant his life," Mother said. "To be discreet does not mean to be dishonest."

She became even more alarmed when she found out one of his assistants was missing also.

On the fourth day, Father was brought home in a stretcher. We were overjoyed to see him, even though he was unconscious. Mother almost fainted when he was brought in because she did not know whether or not he was dead. He was not dead.

"What happened?" she asked the men who brought him in.

One of the men was the night watchman of the factory and had noticed someone in the middle of the night trying to mount

Beethoven. He could tell from Beethoven's neighing that it must be Papa. When he went to look, Papa spoke to him very weakly and then fainted. They were unable to find out anything but brought him right home.

Papa was wet and very feverish. The men helped Mother get him into bed and asked if she wanted them to go for a doctor.

"No," she said, with fear in her voice. They seemed to understand.

When Papa was well enough to talk, Mother sent for Mr. Shalvarjian so Papa could repeat to him what he had told Mother.

We were sent outside the room. Although we were curious to find out what had happened, we did not dare to disobey. Mother said someday she would tell us when she felt we should know. We heard the story gradually and in later years more of the details of this incident.

Apparently "blackmarketing" was not a new racket but has existed from time immemorial. As head of the largest flour mill in that area, responsible for the production of food for a large number of Turkish troops, Papa had been approached by blackmarketeers associated with one of the high-ranking Turkish officers. They demanded that he present a false inventory, showing a million pounds of flour less than was actually on hand.

He had been pressed for some time to conspire with them in this plot. He was promised half the profits. They needed his co-operation in order to carry out their infamous plans. They presented him with the distorted inventory, but they needed his help to divert the valuable goods into the channels they had in mind. Papa was adamant in his refusal to take part in such an ignominious scheme. At first they had tried to reason with him, pointing out the great personal benefits he would derive, the wealth he would acquire, and the power through wealth to save himself and family from whatever dangers might threaten him.

Papa remained impervious to their pleas. They had then resorted to threats if he did not accede to their demands. They had finally issued an ultimatum. He was to let them know his decision within forty-eight hours.

It was at the end of the forty-eight hours that he and his assistant

had been kidnapped, blindfolded, their hands tied behind their backs and forced to walk many hours in the dark. They were locked in a barn in an isolated spot. When their blindfolds were removed, they found themselves facing strangers.

"You know why you are here," they were told. "You will have a quiet night to think over the offer again. And don't try to escape. We'll be outside, guarding, and will shoot if you move."

God has divers ways of coming to the aid of his flock. Maybe this time it was the strangest and most unorthodox way. When Papa saw the bottle of whiskey their enemies were carrying, he had a ray of hope. Maybe they would imbibe so much that their sense of duty as well as their senses would be lost in this "spirit."

During the eerie and perilous hours of the night, Papa and his companion listened apprehensively to every sound outside. Between the hushed tones they could hear swearing and quarrelsome arguments. "We're supposed to shoot them when they are sound asleep," they could hear the guards say.

"If only the whiskey will help the guards fall asleep before they think we are asleep," Papa said to his companion, "we will try to escape."

"It can't be done," his companion said. "How can we? If we break the door, they'll hear us."

"To remain here means sure death. If we try to escape, at least there is a slight chance," Papa said.

And so, when the enemies' flesh had succumbed to the "spirits" and everyone had fallen asleep, Papa and his companion escaped. Although they had been blindfolded when they were brought to that spot, some of the landmarks began to look familiar to Papa. He knew that somewhere near here there must be a river.

After a few hours' walk, the banks of the river were visible. But just then they heard a shot and saw a horseman riding toward them. "Giaours!" he shouted, shooting indiscriminately. As he approached them, their chances of escape lessened. The two escaping men had no weapons. Papa grabbed his companion and they hid behind a tree.

The guard approached them, for a few seconds nonplussed at their disappearance.

"If we can just frighten his horse..." Papa whispered to his companion. They found some rocks and began to stone the horse. The frightened horse kicked, reared, and threw his rider to the ground. Papa seized this opportunity to grab the gun from the guard, hit him with a blow and ran toward the river. In the meantime, the guard had regained his balance and was running toward him. Papa did not want to shoot, so he threw the gun in the river and followed by jumping into the water.

In the meantime the guard was again distracted by the horse running away, so in his haste to capture the horse without which he would have a long walk back, he could not pursue Papa. Papa called for his companion after he had jumped in. Papa had seen him jump while Papa was grappling with the guard. Papa was not a good swimmer but somehow managed to keep afloat until he reached a point where he could hide until dark. He never saw his companion again.

When darkness came to his rescue, he began to grope his way toward the city. Although he was wet and exhausted, a few Turkish peasants who passed him in the night did not notice his disheveled state. He passed them nonchalantly, bidding them salaam.

Before dawn he could see the outline of the factory. He knew that it might be dangerous to be seen by the officer who was responsible for his kidnapping. He also realized that he could never reach home on foot. Fatigue and pain had begun to enervate him. He wondered if Beethoven was still in his stall.

Maybe the night watchman would be the first to see him. In that case he would be safe. The watchman was an Armenian. The Turkish officials did not trust another Turk in this job, and they knew they would have a faithful workman if they kept the Armenian who had worked there for years. He would be grateful not to be banished to Der-el-Zor.

Yes, Beethoven was there. Hovsep, the watchman, must have taken good care of him. As soon as Beethoven saw Papa, he whinnied with joy. Immediately Hovsep was on the scene: "Aram Hoja!" (Sir) he called in surprise and joy. Before Papa had a chance to explain his absence and condition, he had fainted. When he

regained consciousness, he was in his clean, comfortable bed at home, his dear ones surrounding him and weeping with joy.

We were so happy to have him safely back with us that we did not mind when Mother asked us to leave the room so that Papa might rest. We knew that she was going to ask many questions. Some day we knew we would hear all about it. Mother had promised that she would tell us everything we should know — when it was the right time. It was not long before she did tell us.

In a few days Papa began to feel better and said he must go back to work. Mr. Shalvarjian and several formidable looking officers had come to talk with Papa. When the men left, we heard Mother ask if it would be safe for Papa to return. He said he was assured that the suspected men had been transferred and would be punished.

News of Papa's bravery had reached government officials. Two of them had come to urge him to return as soon as possible. They were responsible for the success of the production of the mill—the army had to have bread. There must be no slowing of production. They had ulterior motives in showing kindness and respect to someone whose services they needed.

Every day that Papa went to work was agony for us. Whenever he was late in returning, our fears increased. Some of his friends said he was foolish to take such chances. What loyalty did he have to the Turkish government? He could have been a rich man. Was it worth it?

Papa would say, "It is the principle of the thing. It is the principle of the thing." There was honor even among some Turks. Some of his friends with higher principles came to praise him after they heard what had happened and why.

"A good life can always be a good example and has far reaching aspects," Papa answered those who doubted any benefits from his honesty to a government that was persecuting his people.

Before we had a chance to fully recover from Papa's narrow escape from death, another accident caused us more anxiety. Semma was preparing Cynthia's bath, but before she had time to dilute the boiling water with cold water, Cynthia, still fully dressed and in a playful mood, had jumped into the boiling water. The house

resounded with her agonized screams. We all dashed toward the direction of her cries.

Semma was practically hysterical. Mother had the presence of mind to lift Cynthia from the boiling tub and plunge her into a large crock of vinegar in the nearby kitchen where preparations were being made for pickling later that day. When Mother undressed Cynthia after her vinegar bath, it seemed an entire layer of skin came out with her clothing. Turkish neighbors who had heard the piercing cry offered to call a doctor. This offer of help almost made Mother lose her composure. She thanked them and said she would send for help if she decided a doctor should be called, that she wanted to wait until her husband came home as he had studied medicine and would know what to do.

In her attempt to minimize the gravity of the situation, she had regained her composure and was calmly preparing Cynthia with the necessary medication. Immediately after the neighbors had left, she asked Partam to take a message to a friend but not to let anyone know about it.

Then an unnatural silence spread through the house. Mother instructed us not to let anyone know about this accident. Of course, "Why?" was our expected reply.

"Because we don't want a Turkish doctor," she said. "The Armenian doctors can be more helpful."

It seemed a relief when Papa came home. Anxieties and sorrows that are shared always lessen the heavy load. After the full details of the accident had been explained to Papa, Mother said,

"I did not dare to send for a doctor while people were around, but I sent Partam with a note to Dr. E. I don't know whether or not he will dare to come tonight."

Most Armenian doctors had been conscripted for the Turkish army. Their lives were spared only so long as they could be helpful to their persecutors. If they were unfortunate enough to become ill and temporarily unable to be of help to the army, a bullet through their heads disposed of the problem in a few seconds. Why Dr. E. was allowed to remain in the city I do not know, but it must have been because he was useful in some way to the Turks. Rumors were

always rampant that Turkish doctors went to the homes of Christians and under pretense of giving medical aid were poisoning patients by the hundreds. If this happened, the families of these patients knew they had no recourse to demands of justice. The best they could do was to keep secret the need of a doctor. It was easy to believe such rumors because there were some actual cases. Any form of cruelty was an order of the day.

After dark the doctor and nurse came. The doctor left salves and warned Mother that Cynthia must remain in bed for at least two months, but must not be allowed to bend her knees, that if she did this, the new skin would grow too tight and leave her lame. This meant she must have a day and night nurse to keep vigilance and pull her leg down straight every time she bent it or tried to curl up in bed.

The nurse lived at our house for months and she and Mother took turns staying up nights. We took every precaution to keep this accident a secret, hoping those who knew about it would not purposely or otherwise make mention of it. The doctor came as often as he dared. The nurse was faithful and conscientious. Mother trusted her fully when she had to leave the house in the performance of her duty as private teacher. Whenever we saw a stranger coming toward the house, our fears would mount. Is it a Turkish doctor? Will he force his services and poison Cynthia?

During these crucial ordeals, Mother's dark hair began to turn gray.

"I always thought it was an exaggeration when people spoke of hair turning gray overnight," Mother said, "but apparently fear and anxiety can take their toll in a short time."

But even this had its compensations, for Cynthia was getting better and there was every indication that there would not be any scars on her. It seems a miracle that this came to be true.

Although we were recovering from one more jolt to our immediate family life, it was not easy to be happy or carefree when stories and news were still reaching us about the thousands of Armenians throughout Turkey who were being tortured by inhuman methods. Stories had reached us from Van, Musa, Marash, Aintab, Zeitoon.

Papa's parents were living in Marash. A person who had escaped from Marash brought news that Papa's father had been killed in a cruel manner. What had become of his mother he wondered, but was helpless in trying to find a way to save her and bring her to Tarsus. He did not even know where she was or what had become of his brothers and sister, and their families. Someone said they heard his sister had died also. There was always a ray of hope when one was not sure.

There were also stories of bravery reaching us. Some of the Armenians of Musa had fled to the mountains and had tried to form a fortification to fight the Turks. With little odds in their favor they had fought bravely even though out-numbered. With systematic organization and leadership they had outwitted the enemy and by making white flags of sheets had attracted the attention of the French cruise ship, "Guichen," which was sailing the waters on the other side of the Musa Mountain. All those not killed in battle or dead from illness or exposure had been rescued and taken to an island near Egypt for refuge.

The Armenians who had decided not to hide and fight in the mountains but to try to co-operate with the Turks of Musa and live peacefully with them, believing the Turkish promises of safety if they did this, had all been massacred. They had been given freedom to go to their churches and worship their God. The trick had worked. The churches had been saturated with kerosene and anything flammable that could be found and ignited. Those who tried to flee had been shot. Those who escaped this holocaust met other forms of death after being captured and exiled. Very few had lived to tell the harrowing tales.

Then there would be news of the fighting in the area of Van where there were both American and German orphanages and the American Hospital which Dr. Ussher headed. There was news of Alexandra Tolstoy, daughter of the great Russian author, who had come to Van when the Russian army came to help the Allies. Even after the Russian army had withdrawn to save their necks, Countess Tolstoy had remained to help the sick and needy.

During the epidemic of typhus, many brave Americans, including

Mrs. Ussher, had died. They had made the supreme sacrifice by aiding a horde of Turks who had rushed to the Hospital too late for help but not late enough to spare those who were willing to nurse them back to health so that they might be well enough to kill again. This loyalty to duty in the name of Christianity had not been in vain. There were tales of Turks becoming Christians. They had seen with their own eyes what a Christian could do.

"No kind deed is ever lost," Mother would say when she was called by her Turkish friends and neighbors to help out by either writing letters for them or giving counsel when asked. Many of the Turkish ladies were illiterate. They had husbands and sons far away from home on battlefields. They would ask their Christian friends to write letters for them. Mother could read and write Turkish fluently. "The Lady," they had nicknamed her. She was their Emily Post. She was invited to the weddings of their daughters. Her advice was sought in selecting material for the trousseau.

The daughter of a very wealthy Turk had been promised in marriage to the son of another wealthy Turk. We were invited to the "bath" ceremony. Mother took Tirzah and me.

"You may want to remember some of those customs some day," she said.

We were ready and alert to notice all the strange customs. The shower to the bride was a literal one. Her groom did not know what she looked like until after the ceremony. The groom must depend entirely on his mother's judgment of the fitness of the woman selected to be his wife. A Turkish girl is considered mature and ready for marriage when she reaches her teens and her coming out party is to be secluded — behind the "feradje," her Moslem veil. Once she puts on this veil the only males who may see her are her husband and her sons. When she attends any public functions or is seen on the streets, only her eyes are exposed. A Turk knows therefore that when he sees any unveiled women on the streets, they are not Moslems and all his ogling is directed to the Christian women as he has no opportunity to openly flirt with his own kind.

The mother who has arranged a marriage for her son has an opportunity during the "shower" in a Turkish bath to look over the

bride-to-be. If she is too thin, she is considered sickly. The bath ceremony is like a strip tease act. The mother-in-law-to-be gives her a bath in a routine ceremony. The bride-to-be is garbed in a bath dress or sarong, similar to the American bathing suit of the early twentieth century. All the attendants and guests at this "shower" are dressed this way. In fact, this is the way most people take their public baths as very few homes have what could be called bath tubs.

In a public Turkish bath, the groom's family reserves whatever section of the bath they can afford for this ceremony. One's station in life can often be judged by the bath suits one wears, as here is a chance to show latest silks and materials. Such suits are part of the trousseau of the bride. The mother-in-law-to-be strips the bride-to-be, bit-by-bit, under the pretense of a ceremony so that she may have a chance to see if the bride has any defects.

What happens if she discovers a defect, I do not know.

In this particular ceremony to which we were invited, the bride was only fourteen years old and had the fresh beauty of a girl of semi-mature years. Apparently she was well prepared and trained for what was to come. She did not seem in the least fazed or embarrassed when first her shoulders were bared and bathed, then one breast, and then the other. When this bath of the guest of honor was completed, and all the relatives and guests took their own baths, it was time for refreshments.

A Turkish bath can be a whole day's affair. Other bathers often brought their lunches, too. Apparently the men had a more exciting time in their tents. They not only took a meal but also cards, checkers, and backgammon. We had often heard of fights among the men over a card game. Some would take their iraku (whisky) to help them celebrate their relaxation. Many riots have emanated in the Turkish baths. Men have been known to be knifed. One could really get "steamed" up in these places.

Apparently this bride-to-be was acceptable to the prospective mother-in-law because Mother was invited later to take us to see her trousseau. This fascinated me. I had never seen so many clothes all at once.

"Is this just for one person?" Tirzah and I whispered to Mother. Practically every room in the house had been converted into a show room. There were racks and racks of dresses, shoes, slippers — underwear, jewels, feradjes. How could any person wear out all this in a lifetime! Mother reminded us that all brides were not so fortunate. This particular bride-to-be had a very rich father.

The men had their own stag parties. Even at the wedding ceremony the two sexes did not mix. I wondered what the groom thought of his bride when he finally had a look! Well, if he did not like her, he could always get another one.

There was one ceremony to which we were not invited — not even Mother. We could hear the excitement in the house across the high fence. Mohammed, the thirteen year old Turkish neighbor was to have his coming-out party — it was time for him to become circumcised.

In the English-speaking countries it is the girls who have their "coming out" parties if they are in the higher stratum of society. There is no ceremony at all for the girl who comes from a home of modest circumstances. Probably after she has reached physical maturity and has learned a little more about the facts of life, her most immediate problem is, can she afford to go to college, or what line of work should she follow? Even if she gets married, she still has financial problems to share. The only transition from boyhood to manhood for the average American or English boy probably is the fact that when he becomes thirteen, he may be addressed "Mr." instead of "Master." Even this small detail goes unnoticed in most cases.

But to the Turkish boy who becomes thirteen, it is the turning point in his life. He has become a man. His coming out party is the Circumcision Rite. The ladies of the house prepare for the feast. Relatives and friends are invited for the great occasion—the ladies to help with the cooking and preparation, the men to be present at the ceremony. When the feast and all preparations have been made, the women withdraw to their own quarters. The men are the only spectators.

We could see and hear the preparations for Mohammed's coming

out party. We could see the entire yard from our house which was higher than the stone wall, but we were out of luck. Although we could see the crowd of men and watch the Turkish priest, Muezzin, enter with great ceremony to perform the initiatory rites, we could not see Mohammed. He was surrounded by his male relatives whom he could join as a full-fledged man after the rites. We expected him to yell but were disappointed again. It would have been unmanly of him to utter a cry. If he winced, again we would not be able to see this. Soon the rites were over and the feast began. The fatted calf was being served and Turkish music drowned the noise of the merrymakers. We had not seen the actual ceremony. We felt cheated.

Mother had many friends among the neighbors, most of whom were Turks. Across from the house lived the General who had come with a bride twenty-years younger, the city grapevine had said. Even though she was a Turkish General's wife, this did not necessarily mean she was a Turk. Rich, influential Turks could have their pick. Soon the non-Moslem wives would lose their identity, especially after the first child was born.

One day we heard muffled sounds from the apartment across the street where the General lived. I heard Papa say, "I wonder if he is beating her again?"

Mother said, "Little pitchers have big ears," whereupon we wanted to know which pitchers she meant. And where were the ears?

The next day a servant brought a message to Mother who immediately followed the servant to the General's apartment. That evening we overheard Mother tell Papa, "Just as I thought. She is an Armenian, not a Turk. She says he is good to her when he is sober, but when he is not, he beats her. I wish we could do something for her. She has no friends. She cries all the time. The woman servant is very kind, but both the wife and the servant are afraid of the valet. He watches every move when the General is away."

The servant had seized the first opportunity to come to Mother during a brief and rare absence of the valet. Father said they must think of some way to be friends without arousing the animosity of the General.

The General and Papa were the only ones on the street who owned horses. The General was always in uniform and we used to peek out the window to watch him come and go. "He is cruel to his horse too," Mother used to say. Whenever his horse neighed, Beethoven would start to neigh also. Papa used to say after the two horses became friends, maybe the two families can become friends so that the poor wife would not be so miserable.

One day we heard Beethoven neighing more enthusiastically than ever. Papa and the General had happened to turn around the corner at the same time one evening on their way home. While the two horses were exchanging horse sense, Papa and the General had engaged in conversation also.

"Mother," we ran in to say, "now maybe, the General's wife can come to visit us. Maybe she won't be so sad."

Mother looked out the window and saw what she expected — Papa chatting with the General as if they were life-long friends. A few weeks later the General came to see Papa. He invited Mother the call on his wife. We thought he must be sober because he seemed very nice. He tickled us under the chin and said his wife liked children. Maybe we could visit her, too. Mother returned the call a few days later, taking Tirzah and me.

After the visit, when we returned home and began to chat about the beautiful lady and her beautiful house, Cynthia cried and fussed.

"You won't take me anywhere," she said.

Mother knew Cynthia must be getting much better. Her illness and confinement had been such an ordeal. Her new skin was appearing and there seemed to be no scars. The doctor's rigid orders not to have her curl up while sleeping or at any time had been followed faithfully. Henceforth, "vinegar" was the byword in our house whenever anyone was burned.

Papa had no more threats from racketeers, but there was always some unrest. Although we were safe for the time being, evidence of suffering was always around us. Hundreds of Christians continued to pass through the city on their way to be deported and exiled. News would reach relatives in the city that dear ones had been executed. It was not safe to go very far from home. Our immediate

Turkish neighbors were friendly because they knew who we were. Those who did not know us would threaten us and call us "giaour." They made fun of our European clothes. They envied our comparative life of luxury. Food, and especially bread, was abundant in our house because Papa not only could afford it but could get all the flour we needed.

Mother always managed to take all she could to friends in need and to suffering exiles passing through the city. We ate white bread which was much more expensive than dark bread. Tirzah and I used to sneak white bread to the neighbor's children because they had never had white bread and we were curious to taste their dark bread. Whenever Semma was not watching, we planned a bread exchange during our mid-afternoon snacks.

Mother was quite worried about our lack of educational opportunities, in spite of the fact that she realized most people were concerned only with saving their lives. Thoughts of education were not the problem of the day. However, she undertook our entire program. She not only taught us reading and writing—in English—but also sewing and cooking. She realized that the vicissitudes of life are such that the rich can be poor and the poor, rich. "You must learn to sew and cook and keep house," she would say while teaching us all that we should know, "so that you will not feel helpless when the need arises."

Since Papa was the mathematician, that was his job. But we were getting very far behind in this subject which we had hardly begun. Papa always left the house early and came home late. He worked on Sundays. He also often worked on the Turkish Sabbath because, as they said, he was not a Turk and there was much work to be done. There was practically no visiting done among Armenians. It was not safe to go out visiting either during the day or night. If a Turk took it upon himself to shoot an Armenian, it was accepted as a matter of course. Often there were neighborhood skirmishes and it was hard for a Christian to find justice in the courts.

We were awakened one night by a Turkish neighbor who wanted to see Mother and Papa secretly. Word had reached them that all Armenians in the city, regardless of what protection they had

enjoyed in the past were, without exception, to be killed when the signal was given. The neighbor had come to offer us refuge. He had a big house, he said, where we could all hide. No one would think of searching his house for Christians, especially for our family. Mother and Papa said they did not want to jeopardize him and his family, that they would leave the matter in the hands of Allah, but that they thanked him from the bottom of their hearts.

"May Allah show grace to you and yours," Papa said. "He makes good people among all nations and creeds."

This unexpected, frightful rumor turned out to be the harbinger of good news. The Turks had been planning a last effort to massacre every Armenian when news was reaching them that the war had taken a turn in favor of the Allies. There was talk among the Turks of an Armistice. Knives were being sharpened for the last slaughter.

"Pray God that help will come before this final bloodshed which will probably be the most cruel and desperate," Papa said.



CHAPTER 5

Armistice

God had heard our prayers. There was great rejoicing: the war had ended. The Turks were defeated. However, the Armenians were cautious and prudent in the first hour of victory. They moved about as if they did not know the good news. Word had circulated among the Armenians that they should remain calm and not obvious in their rejoicing for as yet there was no army of occupation in the city. The Turks were still in the majority and had all the weapons.

As soon as Papa heard that the first contingent of Allied soldiers would arrive on a train from Mersin, he hired a carriage and said the whole family would drive quietly to the railroad station. Before we left for the station, Papa called on the Turkish neighbors and assured them that this turn of events would bring only peace and friendliness and not revenge. He said all the Armenians had been told to practice their Christian principles and not hurt any Turks. He asked them to let him know if they needed him at any time. They said "Allah praise you and your family and send you sons."

It was reported that many of the soldiers who comprised the American Army in the Allied army of occupation were Armenians. They had joined as American citizens but were happy to be among those who had come to the country of their ancestors as liberators.

En route to the station we noticed that the blinds of the homes of all the Turks were drawn. Sad indeed was the day for them. Even in their darkest hours, I am sure they did not fear their conquerors. They must have sensed that the American professors, missionaries, and all the other Christians in the city would not show a spirit of revenge. There could always be a few who would get out of hand, of

course, as in any group. The days ahead proved the Christian spirit. As long as they were not molested and did not suffer, they could not blame the celebration of the handful of Armenians who had survived scourge of war and deportation.

For the first time in years the church bells rang. There was beauty even in the discordant tones of bells that were not synchronized, bells that had rusted from disuse. The bells of the Protestant, Catholic, and Gregorian churches were forming an unrehearsed trio, singing with joy rather than precision.

History relates that the Armenian Church was founded by Gregory the Illuminator.

"It is the oldest national church and is distinct from the Greek Church. The earliest authentic accounts of the introduction of Christianity into Armenia date from the apostolic exertions of St. Gregory, who at the end of the third century, converted King Tiridates and a large number of the people. Christianity was strengthened in Armenia by Mesrob's translation of the Bible into the Armenian language in the fifth century. Following the ecclesiastical controversy concerning the twofold nature of Christ, the Armenian Christians refused to accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon and they constituted a separate church, which took the title of Gregorian.

"In 1439 the union with Rome was accepted by the scattered members, mostly nobles, of the Armenian Church outside of Armenia. The Armenian Church was thus split up into a Catholic or united, and a Schismatic or non-united party. The head of the Catholic Church whose title is *Catholikos*, and to whom the Armenian patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople are subordinate, resides at Etchmiadzin, a monastery near Erivan in Russian Armenia. This site has been the ecclesiastical metropolis of the Armenian nation since 302 A.D. and claims to be the oldest monastic foundation in the world."

A further split in the church came about in the sixteenth century during the Reformation. Thus, the people of Armenia were of three faiths [Gregorian, or national Eastern Church, Protestant, and Roman Catholic] but all have always been proud of their early Christian

background. St. Gregory has become to most Armenians what St. Patrick is to the Irish.

During the Great Crusade, because of the influx of soldiers from the West, many intermarriages resulted. The necessity for the transportation of large numbers from Mediterranean ports to the East resulted in a great ship-building trade. Commerce between the East and West began to grow rapidly. There was an interchange of culture.

At the end of World War I, as in all other wars and massacres, Armenians had become the victims directly or indirectly of the conquered and conquering armies. As a result of their aid to Russia, one of their allies, they had been left to the mercy of the Turks when Russia found it necessary to withdraw her armies near Van in order to use them for the internal strife that was the beginning of the Russian Revolution.

Now, following the Armistice of 1918, Armenians had great faith in the armies of occupation. Surely, they would now be protected. More than any other single factor, they believed that Christianity linked them with the West. Although about a million Armenians had been massacred, their faith in a Christian world had not been dimmed. They had accepted the vicissitudes of conquest and oppression. Their faith had been justified in this Great Day.

Armenia, maybe more than many other nations caught in the great whirlpool of conflict, looked upon America as its Savior. It seemed to them that there was divine symbolic significance in the fact that among the army of occupation were Armenian-American soldiers. The Armenian boys wore American uniforms with great pride. They were prouder still to speak of their adopted land.

It was a day of triumph when we rode in the carriage to the railroad station. There were tears of joy for a bright future as well as tears of sadness and heartache for those who had made the supreme sacrifice. With mixed emotions, the throng of people waited for the train that was to bring the first contingent of soldiers to occupy the city of Tarsus and help to bring about peace among opposing factions.

As the train approached, the noise of the locomotive was

drowned by the cheering of the crowds at the station. It must have seemed like a grand homecoming to the strangers who alighted from the train. Several national anthems could be heard-[the Armenian] "Pumpvoradan," "The Marseillaise," "The Star Spangled Banner," "Long Live the King." Soldiers were being kissed by old ladies and young ladies. Babies were being tossed in the air, caught again and kissed. A few of the soldiers seemed to have relatives to greet them.

On the march to the city from the railroad station, the troops were preceded and followed by people riding on horseback, arabas, or on foot. There were a few automobiles. Through the drawn blinds one could see now and then anxious faces, probably wondering if the result of this victory would mean revenge on them.

The Christian leaders of the city were doing all in their power to persuade their people that they must not accept this victory in a spirit of vindictiveness, that here was the greatest opportunity before them to show their Turkish neighbors what Christianity really meant. It was a challenge which was well met. Rare were the cases of men and women who had become bitter beyond help and pitiful indeed were these cases. It showed to Christians and Turks alike that hatred can destroy the hated as well as the hater.

The Armenians going back to church without fear could well be likened to the pilgrims who had found a new freedom of worship. Mother had made life in America so vivid to us that sometimes I wonder whether I actually saw pictures of the scenes she described or if her description had painted an indelible picture in my mind.

I felt like a Mayflower pilgrim going to church in Plymouth except that the church was in Tarsus. There were many Americans in the congregation, Americans who were also the product of a people who had fought for freedom of religion. They could, therefore be the staunchest supporters and allies of another people who had died in the name of Christianity.

There was rejoicing and weeping at church. Many of these people, although they had been living in the same city during the war, had not seen one another for years and did not know "who had survived and who had been deported. It was like friends being united.

In many cases the years had taken their toll. Many were emaciated from privations and anxiety; many were literally in rags. But they were proud to come to church in rags. Many were anxious to find out if missing faces meant these friends were no longer in Tarsus or still living somewhere else and could return home. Everyone was really praying with their souls. They sang in unison with their hearts.

The sermon was in Turkish. Not many Armenians could speak their own language. Turkish by force had become their mother tongue. In this respect the Turks had been total victors. However, the Bible had been translated into Turkish but with Armenian characters. Already the missionaries had taken advantage of this and had often persuaded Turks to listen to the Scriptures in their own tongue. Converts to Christianity had taken place.

I always enjoyed the singing in church but could not understand why it was necessary to do any talking. That seemed to be a waste of time and always put me to sleep. Mother used to say, "Just count the number of words you can understand. The next time we sing, count again and you'll be surprised how your list will get bigger each time." I had tried this but had to be told I would have to do it silently. When I tried to do it silently, I would fall asleep but the singing would startle me and wake me up again.

At first I found myself competing with myself, but later Tirzah was so far ahead of me that I would try to catch up with her long list. Whenever there were strangers in the church and we were introduced to them, someone would always say, "These are the children who speak English." Although Mother was always proud of her accomplishment, she would add that we would soon be able to speak Armenian also.

Occasionally there would be an American or English preacher. We had no excuse to fall asleep on these occasions although we were still too young to grasp fully the sermon. Then someone would always translate it briefly. We had our own hymn books in English. Mother would find the right page for us and we would sing in English while the others sang in Turkish. The music was the same.

On this particular Sunday following the arrival of the Allied

soldiers, on the way from church we stopped to visit a Turkish lady who was very fond of Mother. Mother said she must show a friendly spirit and visit her soon, lest she think that Mother in the hour of triumph would forget her.

As we entered the lady's house, we saw her kneeling on her prayer rug in her devotions. When she heard us enter, she turned around to greet us and went back to praying. Mother motioned us to sit down quietly. The lady stopped her prayers again and asked us to make ourselves comfortable and then continued her prayers.

Whenever the lady thought of something to say, she would stop her prayers to carry on a conversation. I think Mother must have read our minds because she whispered that the woman did not want to stop praying as that was the hour of prayer — the muezzin, a public crier, was calling from the minaret tops at high noon — yet at the same time she wanted to be hospitable to her guests. When she finally finished her prayers, she rolled up the rug, put it in its place and greeted us again.

Mother said we were passing by and she wanted to stop to tell her that Father would be glad to vaccinate her boys. There were quite a few cases of smallpox in the city and the Turks were beginning to follow the Christians in their use of medicine and modern methods of cure. The lady said she had persuaded her husband to have her sons vaccinated. We rolled up our sleeves and showed her where we had been vaccinated, just to reassure her that it would be all right, Mother said.

"Anything you advise, I am sure will be all right," the lady told Mother. She said her husband would bring the children to our house the next day as Mother had said Father could not do it on Sunday. She passed us some Turkish coffee and lokoom (Turkish sweet paste). Mother took the coffee and lokoom but said we could have just the lokoom. I did not mind foregoing the coffee as I had sipped some one day when no one was looking and spit it right out because it tasted so bitter.

The lady thanked Mother and sent Salaams to Aram Effendi and said may God bless us all and Mother said the same thing and each seemed to know that they were still friends.

When we arrived home we found Papa chatting away with a soldier named Sam. He was an Armenian from America. Papa had invited him to dinner. Sam told us all about life in America. He said his home was in Watertown in the state of Massachusetts. We asked Mother what state meant and tried to say Massachusetts. We tried to make a song of Massachusetts and repeated it till we could memorize it.

"Will we live in Massachusetts when we go to America?" we asked Mother and Papa. They could not tell yet.

Sam tried to persuade Papa to go to Massachusetts. He said Boston was a fine place. Papa said he had not made any definite plans yet but had heard of the General Electric Company in Schenectady in New York. He was interested in science. He said he would like to study when he reached America and do something in the scientific line. He had an Armenian friend in Schenectady who had written to him and thought Papa would be interested in working there. We soon forgot about Massachusetts and were trying to say "Schenectady." Mother and Papa told Sam they were going to make plans right away to go to America. They would have to get in the first quota and then would plan to go to Marash to see if Papa could claim his property so he could sell his vineyards in order to go to America with enough money.

The next time Sam came he brought another soldier with him and he told us more about America. He always chewed gum, it seemed. He used to bring us gum, too. We would climb all over him to play a game to see in which pocket he hid the gum and candy. Most Armenians had dark eyes and dark hair but Sam had green eyes and light brown hair.

"One of your ancestors must have been a Crusader," Papa had said teasingly to Sam.

"What is a Crusader?" We deluged him with questions.

"When you study history, you will learn all about them," Mother said and then we teased her for a history lesson. We wanted to know more about Sam. "There must have been quite a number of Crusaders in my ancestry," Papa had added laughingly. "My sister had red hair, and so did Daisy's Aunt Paypee."

The name of Aunt Paypee injected a note of sadness to the occasion and Mother changed the subject. She asked Sam if he had a wife and family. He said he did not but planned to get married while in Tarsus and would take a bride to America. I have an idea he probably came to our house often because he thought Mother and Papa could play Cupid and find a nice girl for him. Tirzah told him she and I were flower girls when Mrs. Rogers had married Dr. Nute and wanted to know if we could be flower girls when he got married. He promised us we could.



CHAPTER 6

1918-1919

In the spring of 1918 Papa and Mother were making preparations for our trip to America. There was much talk of francs and foreign exchange rates. A man we called Uncle Krikor would come almost every evening and Papa and he would exchange bank notes for gold coins. He always carried a suitcase full of money.

The gold liras would be spread all over the room. We used to play with them like marbles.

"This is what will take us to America," Papa would say.

What Uncle Krikor did with the money he took in the suitcase we did not know, but Mother warned us we must not tell anyone.

"He is saving it for us and we don't want thieves to know about it," she would say. "If they find out, we won't have any money to go to America."

She must have known we would never divulge a secret that would prevent us from going to America.

Soon we were packing. It took days and days for Mother to decide what she should save to take to America.

"We must take very little," she said. "We will just take our rugs. Everything else will be better in America."

"But why won't the rugs be better?" we would ask.

"I think someday they will be better, but just now everyone is so busy there making new things that they have not yet had time to make better rugs. Someday people who make good rugs here might go to America and then America can make the best rugs, like everything else."

When Mother started to sort out pictures, that was the most fun

of all, especially the pictures of Papa which he sent Mother while they were engaged and he was studying at the university in Beirut. Mother did not like mustaches and had told Papa she did not. While at school, Papa had not only grown a mustache, but also a beard. He had sent a picture of himself with his new face. Mother had laughed, knowing full well Papa would not look like that when he returned.

She also kept all his letters. We would look over her shoulders while she read some of his letters. She had kept all his letters. Each salutation of his was the same—"M.M.P.D." Each letter of hers was signed the same—"Y.M.D.A." We teased Mother to tell us what those letters meant but she would smile and say that was their secret. Some day she said she would tell us.

"When?" we would keep teasing. "How old would we have to be to find that out?"

"I don't know yet, but I will know when the right time comes," she said. Getting older was going to be so exciting. There was so much for us to learn.

Before we left for America we were to go to Aleppo to visit Uncle Hagop and bid him goodbye. Then we would spend the summer in Marash to visit more friends and where Papa would sell all his vineyards. We said goodbye to friends at the college. There was a party for us. Friends came to the railroad station to bid us goodbye. Some cried. Mother cried too.

"We'll see you again before we leave for America," Papa said. "We'll have to pass through here to go to Mersin, where we'll take a boat." "People always cry when they are saying goodbye," someone said.

Adana was the first stop after we left Tarsus. As usual, Papa disappeared and was nowhere in sight when the train began to move. As usual, we were excited again. Mother tried to remain calm. Soon Papa appeared, trying to look innocent.

"What would happen if you really missed the train?" Tirzah was saying. It had a familiar note. Mother smiled.

It was exciting to watch the scenery all the way. There were peasants and farm animals. Sometimes there were high mountains.

Sometimes tunnels. At one point the train stopped suddenly and the whistle blew and people who were standing up fell down. There seemed to be much excitement. The train had come to a complete stop and some people went out to see what had happened. Papa went too, of course. When he came back he told us a cow had been killed. She was crossing the tracks and the engineer thought the cow would get by before the train reached her but the cow was in no hurry.

When we reached Aleppo Uncle Hagop met us at the station. His servant, Vartan, was with him. Vartan took care of our baggage and we went to a carriage which was waiting for us.

We traveled over cobblestone streets to Uncle's house. It seemed such a big house for only one person and his servant. The yard was of white marble with one mulberry tree growing right out of the marble yard. There was one section that had several rooms full of pianos. Another section where we were to stay was huge. Mother explained that it used to be a church and since it was not being used during the war, Uncle Hagop had hired the big section that Uncle Hagop assigned for our quarters. His rooms and Vartan's were in another section. Vartan did everything for him.

"Where is Semma?" Uncle asked Mother.

They started to talk in Turkish but soon remembered we could understand, so they switched to Armenian. From what we had heard in Tarsus and was said between Mother and Uncle Hagop before they realized we were absorbing knowledge we were not ready for, we knew Mother was not happy about parting from Semma. Mother and Papa had an argument, which they very seldom did. Papa said they should give Semma another chance. Mother said she had given her several chances already and that the last time it happened, Semma had promised she would not run away with "that man." Mother had said she would give her one last chance and that if she ever ran away with him again, Mother would not go back on her word.

When Semma was missing again a neighbor had come to tell Mother that she should know who was behind all this. The wife of a faculty member always had trouble with servants. She was never

able to keep anyone more than a few weeks and had always envied Mother for having one who had been faithful for years. She had tried to persuade Semma to come to her house, but Semma had always refused until the woman promised her a husband.

"Is Semma married? Has she a husband?" we had asked excitedly.

"She thinks she has," Papa had replied before Mother had a chance to change the subject in our presence. Poor Semma had come back after a few days, crying. Mother took her back the first time and the second time. The third time she could not go back on her word. The lady who had promised her a husband finally took Semma. Mother had cried when Semma finally left. It was like a member of the family departing permanently. We missed her too. We will have to find someone else when we get to Marash, Mother had said.

Vartan had supper ready. Mother helped him and then put us all to bed. I am sure they talked more about Semma after we went to bed. They were also talking about a girl Uncle was supposed to marry. After we had been in Aleppo a few days, we overheard conversations that Uncle Hagop had a young girl come to his apartment several times. It had shocked everyone, even if Vartan was there also. They thought he was too modern even if he had been in Europe to study.

The first morning we awakened in Uncle Hagop's house it was pouring. We were disappointed—we wanted to play in the marble yard and climb the mulberry tree. We played in the section of the house that had all the pianos. We each had more than a piano apiece to play. This was Uncle's studio but the extra pianos were for sale; he was also in the piano business. I don't know what Uncle thought of his four little nieces all banging on pianos. When we got tired of banging on the pianos and trying to play a tune, we would bother Vartan by asking him why Uncle Hagop did not have a wife.

"Maybe someday he will," Vartan would say and change the subject. "He is busy now getting ready for a concert he will give in a few days."

Now we had another subject to ask questions about. We wanted to go to the concert. Mother promised we could.

The next day there were many visitors. Everyone talked about what had happened to them during the war years. Some began to cry when they told of dear ones who had been victims or those who were missing. There was always hope that some day the missing ones would return. Someone asked Mother about Aunt Paypee. This made Mother cry. She told us to go out to play. We wanted to hear more about some of the things they were saying, but the sun was shining and we wanted to climb the mulberry tree.

Tirzah was the first one on top. Before we had a chance to climb it, too, Tirzah fell off the tree. She did not get up. We thought she was playing so we tickled her. She didn't move. We rushed in the house to call Mother. Tirzah had fainted. Then Papa and the guests came out and Vartan was sent to get a doctor.

Tirzah was soon put to bed and everyone was excited. Uncle Hagop was not home because he was in the city making preparations for his concert. Mother said we should not tell Uncle that Tirzah was sick because she hoped she would be better before he arrived home. She did not want his concert to be spoiled. Fortunately, Tirzah was soon much better and the doctor said she was lucky she was not killed hitting her head on hard marble. By the time Uncle Hagop came back, Tirzah was conscious again and her only worry seemed to be that she might miss the concert. We promised Mother and Papa we would not try to climb the tree again.

We were all excited when we got to the concert hall. It was so much fun riding through a city full of lights. It was not at all like Tarsus. The streets in Tarsus were dark at night.

I am sure Mother was very proud of her brother. We were excited too, hoping he would play some of the things we liked. Tirzah and I were able to keep awake all through the concert but Cynthia and Nora dozed off when they found out he might not play our favorite barnyard concerto. Papa clapped very hard after he played something by Paganini. Papa said his next horse would be named Paganini.

We were to buy two horses at Aleppo before we went to Marash. Papa and Mother were to ride the horses to Marash as there was no

train service from Aleppo to Marash. It was very mountainous country and people said it would be many, many years before there would be train service or roads on which automobiles or trucks could travel. The only way at present was by horse or horse caravan.

The day after the concert, Mother and Papa went shopping in the many shops in Aleppo. They were to buy not only clothes for us but two horses and hire a ghatturji (caravan owner) to take us to Marash. We knew what Papa's horse would be named. We asked Mother what she would name her new horse. She said it would be Mozart.

When Mother and Papa returned from their shopping tour, we knew something was wrong. Papa was very quiet which was always a bad sign. Generally when Papa entered a room, the atmosphere became vibrant.

"Well, children," he began in answer to silent questions on everyone's face, "don't do what I did today-be careless among strangers. Someone pickpocketed me out of 500 pounds. I should have been on my guard."

Then there was silence again. It must be very serious, we thought, although we did not know the full value of 500 pounds. It was years later that we realized this would have been worth \$2500 in American money!

When Uncle Hagop came home, there was conversation in Armenian which meant the words spoken were not for our ears. Uncle Hagop must have been impressed by what was said, we thought. Apparently he knew the value of 500 pounds.

The program for the evening was not postponed on account of this morning's bad beginning. Mother and Papa were to go visiting while Uncle Hagop took us to a circus and a cinema. We had been to neither before and the atmosphere was rife with excitement. In spite of the dampened spirits that ended Papa's morning shopping tour, there were joyous cries when packages were opened to try out new clothes for our afternoon's schedule.

"I wish I had bought two of everything," was the only remark Mother made in reference to the pickpocket loss.

Uncle Hagop did not have enough arms to carry all of us, but we

managed to share what he had. He took Nora in his arms and led us to the carriage awaiting us outside. Vartan had been sent out to hire the carriage as Uncle did not have one of his own.

To reach the street from Uncle's house we had to go through an archway built under the section of the house in which he lived. There were heavy, wide bolted doors. Maybe during the many massacres and war years the church had to be locked and guarded and no changes had been made yet. One could not think of changes when one always expected another war or another massacre.

With Uncle's and Vartan's help we climbed into the carriage and off we went over cobblestone streets, listening to the rhythm of the horses and watching the people on the streets watching us and waving at Uncle, probably wondering where all the children came from.

The ride to the circus grounds seemed all too short. Before we could see the big tents we could smell the peanuts and popcorn and hear the cries of the vendors. Before we had reached America, America had come to us—here was the Barnum and Bailey circus. We had seats right in front. It was too exciting to see a man riding a bicycle on a wire and a lady with not much clothing on (by the standards of the day!) balancing herself on a wire. Her beautiful parasol intrigued me more than her agility, although we all gasped at the moment when we thought she would fall down “right in your lap, Uncle.”

We loved the clown, even though he frightened Nora at first. Then, best of all, came the animals. If this was America, we were more than sure we would love America!

How happy four little girls could be with worldly pleasures. All the pleasures of the day seemed more than we could absorb. After the circus, Uncle took us to a restaurant. Everyone seemed to know Uncle and asked questions about us. The place seemed to be filled with beautiful ladies. Everyone seemed so gay. It was hard to realize that the days of sorrow could so soon be filled with joy.

Some people were speaking French. Uncle could speak French. I could recognize a word here and a word there and capitalized on my knowledge. When Tirzah and I had come home following our

first French lesson in the violet gardens of St. Paul's College, we had a almost driven Semma to madness by exploiting our limited knowledge of a few words. "*Ferme la porte. Ferme la fenêtre. Ferme la bouche.*" This last one we liked best and had Cynthia and Nora saying it.

"What for all this 'ferme' Semma had said. Then we had tried to act out all the "fermes." And now here in Aleppo, we tried French where even the dessert was French. We all had a "*glace.*"

"It tastes like dondurma," we said to Uncle.

"That's what it is," Uncle said.

"Just like Partam used to make for my birthday," Tirzah said. "I wish we could take him to America with us," she added.

"There will be plenty of ice cream in America," Uncle assured us, "even if Partam cannot go with you."

Our cup was running over. First, the circus, then the gay restaurant with all the beautiful ladies and now we were going to the cinema! We had never been to a cinema and did not know what to expect. Just the anticipation of something new was excitement in itself. The pictures had already begun when we arrived. All I can remember is men on horseback, fighting.

"Why doesn't somebody stop that bad man," Nora shouted when the fighting was at its height.

"Hush," Tirzah said. We had already attracted the attention of the people nearby because we were speaking English. "It's only make believe." Then Nora fell asleep. Soon Cynthia's head was bobbing up and down. I was trying to keep awake but it was getting more and more difficult.

"I think we had better go home now," Uncle said.

Tirzah was the only one awake and wanted to stay. We stayed a little longer and then we left. Uncle Hagop hired a carriage which was waiting outside. We were all awake again. The streets seemed like fairy land—here were the lighted streets we had never seen before and we passed a cafe where people were sitting at tables set outdoors under colored lights.

"Oh, please let us go in there," Tirzah begged.

By this time we were all awake. Uncle asked the driver to wait

for us for a few minutes. We had the excitement of going to a cafe where people were even gayer than the ones we had seen in the restaurant. We had more glaces. Many people came to speak to Uncle Hagop, especially some beautiful ladies.

"We enjoyed your concert," one of them said.

We were so proud of him.

"He's our Uncle," Nora said. We had all wanted to say it but somehow Nora always said the things we were thinking we would like to say.

"This little girl speaks English?" one of the ladies asked.

"They all speak English," Uncle Hagop liked to say to friends.

One of the waiters was a bald-headed man. His shiny pate intrigued me as I could not remember ever having seen someone without any hair at all. While I was thinking this, Nora was saying to him, "Why haven't you got any hair?"

We giggled and I am sure Uncle was glad we were speaking a language not everyone could understand. The man answered with a smile, maybe thinking the little girl was admiring him or thanking him for the goodies he was bringing.

We tried to keep awake going home in the carriage. We wanted to see everything. We showered Uncle Hagop with questions. He must have been relieved when we reached home and found Mother and Papa were back.

"I hope they did not wear you out," Mother said when we all started to talk at once. One of us was talking about the circus, another about the cinema, the cafe, the sights on the streets.

"It probably was too much for one day," Mother said, "but we must start out for Marash in a day or so."

The next day was Sunday. Of course, we all went to church. Uncle Hagop led the choir. We could not understand what the minister was saying, but knew all the hymns. Mother said we could sing it with the English words. Everybody was looking at us. Maybe it was because we were all dressed alike, even Mother.

After the services, many people came to speak to Mother and Papa. People asked us questions in Armenian and Turkish. The Armenian questions we could not answer. The Turkish questions we answered in English.

A lady asked in English, "You are all dressed like your mother?"

Nora said, "Mother has a new corset on but we haven't."

Fortunately, Mother was busy talking with someone else. Tirzah yanked Nora's hand. "It came from Paris," Cynthia added. I felt grown up because I didn't say anything.

"Little children and old people talk too much," I had overheard Mother say once, so whenever I wanted to act adult, I did not say much. "Asking questions is not like talking," I had rationalized.

On the way home we told Mother what Nora and Cynthia had said about her corset. There must have been times when Mother must have questioned the wisdom of teaching children things other children were not taught. She seldom seemed fazed.

"Maybe when I teach them a new word, I should tell them when and where to use it," was all she said to Papa, who had a way of saying, "Shame, shame" - with a twinkle in his eyes.

There were more guests in the evening. Some of them had come to say goodbye before we left for Marash and then America.

"Oh, we will be back here on our return from Marash," Papa said. So this would not be a final goodbye to Uncle Hagop and other friends. We would have to come back to Aleppo to take a train for Tarsus as there was no direct train service from Marash to Tarsus. We would stop at Tarsus before boarding the boat at the nearest seaport, Mersin.

Our goodbyes in Tarsus had not been final, either. Almost everyone who came to us had friends or relatives in America.

"I think America will some day be the final refuge of the persecuted Armenians," one of the guests had said.

"What could be a better haven?" someone else had said.

"If America is so wonderful, why do so many Americans come here?" Tirzah had asked logically. [Tirzah obviously was referring to the many American missionaries.]

"Because they are very nice people. They know all Armenians cannot go to America, so they bring part of America here," Mother had replied. "It is the people who make a country and these good American missionaries are trying to bring everything good from America here. Already, they have changed for the better not only Armenians but also many Turks."

An American missionary who was present had repeated Mother's words many times and her husband, a minister, had preached a sermon on this theme and had said to Mother, "And America can use a missionary like you there."

On Monday, we started to pack for our trip to Marash. We left many things with Uncle Hagop since we would pick them up on our return. Mother had bought quite a bit of valuable jewelry, "as an investment," she used to say. We took much of it with us, but left half of it with Uncle Hagop.

"There is still some danger of highway robbers," she had said.

We were to leave at daybreak for Marash by horseback. There was talk of a railroad to be built but as yet it was only in the stage of rumor. Although the territory was under English occupation [after the defeat of Turkey in World War I], it was still Turkey. What the final treaty would provide, no one yet knew.

Very early Tuesday morning, the ghatturji and two other men and his caravan of horses arrived. Mother and Papa each rode a horse. We children were to ride in basket compartments as we did when we went to Numroon. Papa had promised the ghatturji that if he conducted us safely to Marash, we would offer a very high price for his two best horses. Before Papa had bought and paid for them, we had already named the horse Papa was riding "Paganini," and Mother's, "Mozart." The owner of the caravan did not know what we were talking about but everything would be all right for him as long as he got the price he wanted for the two horses.

Our trip from Aleppo to Marash was uneventful. We were not confronted with robbers or other mishaps. Between Aleppo and Marash is the city of Aintab. There were friends to visit here. We stayed here for two days. Many visitors came to the house where we stayed. This city is famous for paklava, the popular sweet pastry in this section of the country. I remember eating so much of it that I became ill. Mother bought enough to take on the trip.

Many people in Aintab inquired about Uncle Hagop. He had given a concert there once and was well known. There had also been ladies here who had an eye on him—so we gathered from the conversation that went on during unguarded moments of the adults.

As our caravan entered Marash, many people on the streets greeted Mother and Papa. Friends-Armenian and Turkish-remembered the family. We children had a hard time straining our necks, looking above our baskets, like reaching for a window too high from which to peer.

We rode right through the center of the city because Papa had hired a house on the outskirts. We could not have the house we generally used because the family who owned it had children who had married and remained there with their children. However, we were still in the section where we had always lived. It was near the American College, the American Hospital, and Bethel, the school which was originally an orphanage run by Germans. It was now a school where there were many orphans from the previous wars and massacres.

This school was a city in itself. It was enclosed in a high stone wall. There were dormitories and school buildings. It even had its own Turkish bath building which was not open to the public but only to those of the school and all the others in the American institutions. There were special days for the children, for the ladies, and special days for the men of the schools and institutions. The officers of the English army of occupation patronized this bath because it was cleaner and more private than the ones in the city. The house that we occupied was enclosed by a high stone wall. Part of this estate had been taken over as the headquarters for officers of the English Army. There were two entry gates. One of them was for our use. The other connected our house with that of the headquarters of the officers. When the house had been rented to Papa, the connecting gate was locked.

As soon as we arrived in Marash, a woman named Elmas came to take the place of Semma. Elmas was to live with us. A man named Bedros came every day to do the shopping and other work done only by men. He did not live with us.

One of our first visitors after our arrival was Miss Mary Blakely, president of the American College for Girls. Mother knew her well because Miss Blakely had been the college president while Mother attended the school. Mother voiced her anxiety that because of the

circumstances our education had been neglected. Miss Blakely said she would be glad to suggest names of tutors if Mother wanted us to study during the summer, as schools had already closed. Mother said she hoped we would leave for America by fall. She told her she hoped Ben Hur would be born in America, that he would arrive probably next January or February.

Miss Blakely said she was glad to see us all and wished us a happy summer in Marash and that she would have many messages to send with us to America. Miss Blakely had graduated from Mt. Holyoke College and hoped that we girls would go there also. So Mount Holyoke became a familiar name to us and when anyone asked us where we would go to school, we would say "Mount Holyoke," not realizing that they were speaking of the present and not of years hence.



CHAPTER 7

“Politics”

Papa soon became involved in the politics of the city. The Armenians were busy organizing churches that had been closed during the war. A Citizens Committee had been formed. Within a day or two of our arrival, Papa had been invited to attend a meeting to help with suggestions. When he returned, he announced that he had been appointed Superintendent of Schools.

“But we won’t be here very long,” Mother reminded him.

“They all urged me to take it until the plans are completed and the program has a good start,” Papa answered. “I’ll give it up when we are ready to go.”

The leading citizens were donating their services. There was no money for salaries. Papa was free, having come to Marash only to wind up his business. Mother was reconciled to the plan and agreed it was a worthwhile cause. She would always be the first one to help advance the cause of education.

Mother soon found herself busy, too, being invited wherever Papa went in connection with the Citizens Committee. The schools were to be held in the several churches since there was no such thing as a public school.

“We seem to be taking care of everyone’s education but our children’s,” Mother remarked. We did not seem to fit into any situation. The new schools were to teach in the Armenian language, but by necessity there had to be some Turkish lessons until the Armenian children could all learn their national language.

We children could not go to any school that taught in Armenian or Turkish. Tutelage was again to be our lot, but Mother wanted us at

least to be with other children. She arranged to have Nora and Cynthia go to a school for girls at Bethel. They would be beginning in the lower grades and could begin learning Armenian with the other young children. Tirzah and I would be too old to go to Bethel and too young to go to the American College where English was spoken.

Mother discussed her problem with Miss Blakely. It was decided that Tirzah and I would go to school at the college everyday and sit in on several of the classes where English was spoken and be tutored between classes when certain instructors had time. Tirzah was twelve years old and was able to keep up with a few of the classes with the help of a tutor. I had to be tutored in all subjects but enjoyed the idea of going to school even if it amounted just to attending the assemblies and taking penmanship classes with a group. It was more fun than studying alone and I was able to keep up with the English classes.

My Armenian tutor was a relative of Mother's. She had blonde hair and blue eyes. She had a bad limp. She had become lame during the war when she was injured in trying to escape from a Turkish man. She had a very sad face and did not smile often.

"Why doesn't Miss Rebecca smile?" I asked Mother.

"I think each day you'll notice she will smile more than the day before," Mother replied.

"But the day before she did not smile at all," I said.

"Maybe if you do your lessons very well, she will be happy. People smile when they are happy."

I tried very hard to do my lessons well. The responsibility of making her happy seemed to fall on me. The first time she smiled, I thought I must have had a very good lesson. I was proud of myself. I saw her speaking to Mother at a tea and I saw her smiling while she talked. Years later I learned why she had first smiled at me. I had used the wrong word in translating a passage from Armenian to English. I thought at the time, thinking about the mystery that caused a smile—even mistakes are useful.

But if I had made a mistake in translation, what Cynthia had done had almost brought down the house. Parents and relatives had been

invited to Children's Day. Cynthia was to recite a verse in Turkish. She was all dressed up and wearing a big pink bow in her hair. Cynthia, a bashful girl, was not too sure of her Turkish but began to speak with relative ease. The poem was about two little hands made to serve God, two little eyes to see his works of wonder. The Turkish word for eyes is "gooz." Cynthia had pronounced it "goet" which means fanny. The uproar in the hall frightened Cynthia. Crying, she had come down from the platform and rushed down the aisle to Mother's arms. Even Mother and Papa were roaring with laughter.

Nora was having her troubles, too. She was like a young colt let loose in a pasture. She was six years old and this was her first experience in going to school. She knew only a few words of Turkish, although her teacher who taught a combination kindergarten and first grade could speak English. The teacher found it necessary to scold Nora in English because she was not getting any results otherwise. One day she had to resort to corporal punishment but even this had no effect; in fact, it had made Nora happy because now she "belonged." Others had the ruler and Nora had wondered why the teacher did not punish her with the ruler. She wanted to get into the game. The teacher's hardest task was to make Nora sit down and not wander around the room and look out the window.

"Nora, will you sit down?" the teacher had asked.

"But I'm not tired," Nora had replied.

Fortunately, Tirzah was orientating herself very well. She could speak Armenian quite well by now. We envied her because she could have a few secrets now. At least, she would make us think so by saying a few words in Armenian to Mother and Papa and when anyone asked her a question in Armenian, she managed an Armenian answer quite satisfactorily.

The day after Cynthia's "recital," Mother had a hard time making her go to school. "They will all laugh at me," she cried again.

"That was the best part of the recital," Papa assured her.

"And you have a new ribbon to wear today," Mother reminded her.

Cynthia was very proud of her new ribbons and this reminder

served its purpose. She would go to school today. Her classmates always envied her hair ribbons because she had so many pretty ones.

"Some of the children don't have any," she had mentioned at home one day.

"If you do well in school," Papa said, "you can invite the whole class to a party and I'll buy them all hair ribbons."

Cynthia told the news to her classmates. There were thirty-five of them. Everyone hoped Cynthia would be the smartest in the class so they could come to a party and each get a hair ribbon.

Mother had sent us to school even though she knew in a month or so we would be leaving again, leaving Marash for the last time. Papa was busy settling his business and doing his duty as Superintendent of Schools. He was trying to persuade the Committee to appoint a successor because he would be leaving soon. When he went to a meeting for this purpose, another problem had faced the committee. News had reached them that the English army of occupation was to withdraw from the city.

"Withdraw?"

Everyone at the meeting had gasped.

"And leave the Armenians at the mercy of the Turks again?"

This would be worse than if no occupying army had come in at all. The Armenians had no ammunition. Even if they had, they did not want to fight again. How could the English do such a thing? Anger and anxiety were in everyone's face. Papa was appointed to see the general at headquarters to check if the rumor was correct and if so to say that something must be done.

So, instead of coming to tell us the school affairs had been settled and that we could start our preparations to leave, Papa had another task. Mother agreed that someone must do something.

Several of the officers from headquarters had come to dinner at our house. Papa got in touch with one of them and that evening had an appointment to see the general in charge of the army of occupation. It was late when he returned home.

He had persuaded the officer to wire General Crawford in Adana that it would be a black mark on England if she took such a step, that the Armenians in Marash were saying that the English

Army might as well kill every Armenian man, woman, and child before they left rather than to leave them without the protection of an army.

There were many anxious days while the wires were going back and forth. Now Papa was spending most of his time at headquarters. The door that had been locked between the two sections of the estates was now open and the English officers and the leading citizens of Marash were meeting either at English headquarters or at our house.

News came at last that although the English army must withdraw, the English government had arranged with the French government to replace their army with French troops. The French troops, they had wired, would arrive only a few weeks after the English army had left.

Papa was angry when he heard this message.

"A few weeks!" he cried. "One day without protection would be enough for the Turks. The French army would arrive only to bury the dead."

He went to see the English general again. The wires were busy again.

[At this point in her memoir, Lydia has written in pencil, "Papa to Adana with English chauffeur. Incident on road." She is undoubtedly referring to an agreement that the British would provide a car with an English driver to take my father to Adana to insist that the British area commander not permit a lapse between the time the British left and the French troops arrived. An incident on the road to Adana was told me in personal conversations with my father and confirmed by later scholarly books, like *The Lions of Marash*, by Stanley E. Kerr, Sr. (Albany: State University Press of New York), 1973. On the road to Adana, the English driver and my father were ambushed by Turkish guerrillas, but raced through gunfire unharmed. After obtaining a promise from British headquarters that British troops would not leave until the French arrived, my father and his driver returned safely to Marash. BHB]

"I thought our days of anxiety were over," Mother sighed.

"Let's leave now, today," we begged Mother and Papa.

"We can't leave now when others need us," Mother said.

"You and the children go," Father said. "I'll join you after I have helped the Committee persuade the general to be vehement in his pleas to his government. He is really trying. He has seen what can happen to helpless people. He has been here during many massacres."

Papa said the general had told him, "If I leave with my army, it will be only because I must, not because I want to or think I should."

There were rumors that the Turks knew what was going on. They had begun the collection of ammunition. They were getting ready for the last slaughter. "This time we won't leave anyone. There will be no survivors after this final massacre," they were boasting.

Parents were afraid to send the children to school. Already there had been fights among [Turkish and Armenian] children. The Turks were calling them "giaours" again. It did not take the Turks long to summon up all the anger and vengeance that had been lying dormant. They were already preparing the list of the leading citizens and their families who would be the first to feel the Turkish sword and fire. The very wealthy and the "giaours" who had opened the churches and schools were at the top of the list.

"Something must be done," Mother said.

Papa went to see the general again. More wires were sent. It was rumored that Miss Blakely had sent a wire to friends in America who had influence in political circles.

"The army must not leave," became the byword.

Word finally came that the English army would withdraw the day the French army arrived. The Armenians wanted to believe this. The Turks hoped it was incorrect news. They were ready for the hour of vengeance.

The general and several officers came to dinner one evening. One of the young officers used to tell Mother all about his girlfriend in England. I remember his name was Mr. Phelan because I had tried to spell it one day and spelled it with an F. He had laughed and taken me on his lap and written out his name. His girlfriend's name was Margaret. He had not seen her for years. He was extremely

happy to be going home after so many years of the war. When he realized what was giving him joy was bringing us sorrow, he tactfully added,

"We won't leave until you are all right, of course."

Mother had presents made for his girl and the girlfriends of some of the other officers and soldiers who had come to dinner. They were handkerchiefs and doilies with needlework that Mother had hired a poor woman to make. Mr. Phelan exclaimed at their beauty and said Margaret and he would always remember us.

At least for several weeks we were assured of the continued protection of the English army of occupation in the city. Everyone tried to get back to normal but one could not fully be light-hearted. One afternoon, Miss Blakely invited Mother, Tirzah and me to a piano recital that the music class was giving. After the recital she asked us to stay for a visit after the others had gone. We went to her private apartment where she told us about America and her alma mater. She played a record on her phonograph which had just come from America. The name of the song was "I'll go tomorrow and come back today." Tirzah and I went into a gale of laughter. We could hardly wait to get home to try to sing the song and hope Papa and Cynthia and Nora would ask,

"How can you go tomorrow and come back today?"

It would be so much fun to explain that "Morrow" was the name of a city! Papa did not disappoint us.

"That is impossible," he said. "How can anyone go tomorrow and come back today?"—and kept a straight face. When we finally explained it to Cynthia and Nora, he said now he understood it, too.

"We'll buy that record as soon as we go to America," he promised.

Late one night we were awakened by voices. Someone was at the gate. Elmas was too frightened to go, so Papa got dressed to go because there was a long yard and garden to cross to get to the gate.

"Try to go to the army headquarters by the other door first to get help in case something is wrong," Mother suggested. But Papa went to the gate from which the knock was coming.

"Who is it?" he asked.

The answer was from someone he knew. The knock had been heard by the soldier on duty at the headquarters. He had alerted others.

"Is anything wrong, Sir?" he asked.

"Not yet," Papa answered. "I'll let you know if there is anything urgent."

The two men at the gate came into the house. We children were only half awake but realized something was wrong. It was hard to go back to sleep. Everyone was talking in hushed tones.

"The Turks are going to begin the massacre as the English leave," one man was saying. "We must send for ammunition."

"But the French Army will be here when the English go," Papa reminded them.

"We can't count on that," the other man said. "The Turks are saying the English are leaving early tomorrow morning."

Papa was aghast.

"Wait here," he said. He went out to the headquarters next door. He told the officer on duty why the two men had come to him.

"I must reassure them," he said. "Is it true? We must know the truth."

"It would have been true. Tomorrow was the original date but all the telegrams sent from here changed the date. But it's true that tomorrow was the original date. I wonder how the Turks knew? Have they any way of intercepting our wires?"

"Then it is not true that you are leaving early tomorrow morning?" Papa demanded.

"Definitely not," the officer responded.

Although Papa had a hard time assuring his two callers, they agreed to leave but to be on their guard. Before they left they said:

"We know where to get ammunition, but we need someone to take a group to bring it here. It's a two-day trip by horseback. There is no other way to get there."

Where they could get the ammunition I could not make out, but I was listening intensely and was getting frightened.

When morning came, the fears of the night seemed dispelled.

Although Mother sent us all to school, she begged Papa not to go into the city. Our schools were within walking distance of the house and the headquarters barracks of the English Army. We were safer there than in any other place. The church schools were in the heart of the city, a city of about 35,000 people. Turks were in the majority, especially since the extermination of so many Armenians during the war—which we thought we had ended.

"If we don't have school as usual," Papa answered, "We'll arouse all the more suspicion in the minds of the Turks."

Mother had to agree to this reasoning. She begged him not to take any chances, not to stop in the market place.

Papa dressed as meticulously as he always did and proudly rode Paganini into the city. Just to see him coming, riding like a general, with great composure must have reassured the frightened students and teachers and aroused the admiration of the Turks. They had saluted him with their salaams as usual. He had stopped to chat with several of the merchants as though nothing new was in the air.

When we returned home from school, several ladies had dropped in to see Mother, most likely to get reassurance from her, too, that all was well with English and French politics—with the Armenians in the middle!

"When do you expect the baby?" a lady was asking Mother as we entered the room. Mother answered her promptly, although the lady seemed to feel that the topic should be dropped in our presence.

"They know all about it," Mother said.

"All?" one of the women asked, very much shocked.

"All that they should know at their age," Mother said nonchalantly. "Ben Hur is too tiny to come out now," Cynthia said, much to the horrification of the ladies.

"How much have you told your children?" someone else asked.

"I think children should learn about life in its normal sequence," Mother replied. "Nothing is ugly or sordid to children until adults make it so."

"Well, maybe you know best," the lady said without much conviction, "but I couldn't tell my children. Someone else will have to tell them."

"You think parents shouldn't tell their own children?" Mother replied. "Who else is better suited?"

"But how can you tell everything?" we heard the woman ask. We were supposed to be in the next room, not listening.

"You can't tell them everything all at once anymore then you can feed them all at once," Mother continued. "Whenever they ask questions, I answer truthfully, although not completely. They know that I answer them only when I think they can understand the answer. They know that as they grow older they will understand more answers."

"Is that the way they do it in America?" one of the ladies asked.

"I hope so," was Mother's reply. "I had also hoped that Ben Hur would be born in America." Mother changed the subject slightly. "But by the turn of events, we may not get there in time. Aram does not want to leave until the city is assured of safety again. The people make him feel that he can be of help, and I think he has been the past few weeks. He has kept in constant touch with headquarters. As you know," she said to one of the ladies, "your brother and Mr. K stay here nights so that if the Army should withdraw without notice, the men can go to the city to warn the Committee who will round up the people and gather them in the churches where they can fight with some strength. We have confidence in the general's promise, but we don't know if he has confidence in his government's promises. We'll just hope and pray for the best."

A few more weeks passed. And yet a few more, but we were not packing for America. The snow was on the ground. Winter had come. And today was the day the English would leave. And today was the day the French army would arrive.



CHAPTER 8

1920

[At the start of January, 1920, devastating events were about to envelope Lydia and the rest of the family. At that time, Lydia was 10, soon to be 11; Tirzah was 12, Cynthia 8, Nora 6, my father 37, my mother 33, and Ben Hur on the verge of being born. BHB]

The French army did arrive. Troop C came on foot, in trucks and on horseback. The English left on foot and on horseback. Papa and a few leading citizens were on hand to thank the English and bid farewell to the general and officers who had been of help to them. The trucks caused a great deal of excitement. Most of the people had never seen such a contraption. How they climbed the hilly streets was a mystery to everyone. The city had no roads for such vehicles, but the trucks made it. The noise awakened those who had still been asleep.

In their limited French, Mother and Papa welcomed the officers. When the English general had exchanged greetings with the incoming French general and had turned over the keys, he had introduced Papa and members of the Citizens Committee.

"When you become homesick," the British officer added, pointing to Mother, "she'll make you feel right at home."

Very soon after the arrival of the French army of occupation, our new guests at dinner were French. Mother and Papa managed pretty well with French. Of course, we could say "*ferme la porte*," and "*ferme la fenêtre*." Mother said it would be best for us not to say,

"ferme la bouche," as they had been invited to dinner and could not very well eat with their mouths shut!

Gradually we were learning a few new words in French. Nora soon learned how to say *"Mon Dieu!"* much to the amusement of the officers and chagrin of Mother. "I heard the soldiers say it," she said. "They said other things but I can't remember them all."

"Thank heavens for that," Papa laughed.

We were next door to the officers' quarters and on very informal terms. They thought nothing of strolling into our yard. Some of them could speak a few words of English and didn't mind speaking to us children in a language not too familiar to them. Maybe children are not as critical audiences as adults.

In the winter of 1919, America was still a dreamland for us, but one that was soon to become a reality. Mother and Papa again began to speak of getting ready to leave. Someone was always present, however, to persuade them to please wait until spring. Maybe by that time the fate of the Armenians would definitely be settled by the victorious Allies. Some of the people of Marash, however, were already beginning to lose faith in the Allies.

"Could this be a sample of what might happen?" some were asking, referring to the slaughter that might have been caused if, at the last moment, the English army had withdrawn without waiting for the incoming French army of occupation.

In the meantime, according to rumors, the Turks were getting ready for a day of reckoning.

"These foreign *giaours* will leave for good sometime," they were saying, "and when they do, we will be ready for the butchery."

Now there were other rumors that the French army would withdraw. The Citizens Committee, through Papa, kept in constant touch with the French General. On days when Papa was not in the city looking after his duties as Superintendent of Schools and trying to find someone to take his place, he was at the General's quarters. Often he would come home with the General or one of the officers. We were always glad when he brought one of the Frenchmen home as we enjoyed listening to them talk even if we did not understand them. Nora would always climb on the lap of

the visitor who seemed to enjoy it. It probably was a nostalgic reminder of the officer's home and children.

During the course of the conversation one day we detected the words "Paris" and "London" and "America."

We must be going to America through Paris, we thought. How exciting that would be! But apparently we had misunderstood. They were talking politics. Could the fate of this remote city be in the hands of politicians in far away world capitals?

Before the Citizens Committee had a chance to persuade Papa to remain in Marash until spring when the schools would have had a good start and a satisfactory successor to him would be found, we were entangled in a political web.

One afternoon a messenger arrived from the city with an urgent note for Papa. Papa was not at home. He had gone to the Turkish bath at Bethel with some of the French officers. It was a day of relaxation for them — so at least they thought when they left. Mother told the messenger she would take good care of the note until he arrived home. He whispered to her in Armenian. Apparently there was no time to waste to take back an answer. Mother suggested that he go to Bethel and ask the attendant at the bath to find Papa for him. We children surmised that for some reason the man did not want to go himself, although he did not want to divulge the exact nature of his errand.

The school at Bethel across the street was familiar to Cynthia. She went there every day with Nora. Her whole class was excited because they had been invited to Cynthia's ninth birthday on January 8. Most of the thirty-five children in her class were orphans of the last war. They generally wore uniforms so the hair ribbons were great luxuries. They knew that at Cynthia's party each one was to get a present of hair ribbons. These children did not have many opportunities to go outside the stone walls of the orphanage. Cynthia seemed like a little princess to them. Mother and Elmas had been making preparations for the party when the messenger had arrived.

"I'll send one of the children to get him," Mother told the messenger.

"Cynthia knows just where the bath is. I am sure she can take a message." Mother then wrote a note and gave it to Cynthia to take to Bethel, instructing her to go to the attendant at the entrance to the bath and ask her to find Papa. The attendant knew Papa well so Mother was sure there would be no complications. Her note started and ended as usual:

"M.M.P.A. A messenger is waiting for you. I'll keep him here until you come Y.M.D.D."

Mother said to the messenger after Cynthia had left, "My daughter Cynthia is very bashful. I try to send her on errands whenever I have a chance."

Bethel was practically across the street from us. Cynthia should not feel bashful about going to such a familiar spot, yet it was always an ordeal to make her go on errands. It was not quite so difficult this time as the party with all her classmates had buoyed up her spirits and she was less reluctant than usual to go on this errand.

"She should be back in a few minutes," Mother told the messenger.

Ten minutes passed. Twenty minutes. Thirty minutes.

"Hasn't she come yet?" The messenger began to get fidgety.

"She must have met some of her classmates and probably they are talking about the party," Mother said calmly to the messenger.

I was excited about the party, too, because we had been born on the same date and it was my birthday also. But I was not having my class at the party. I did not belong to a class. I was an auditor in some classes with girls in their late teens or I was tutored all by myself. I wished I could belong to a class too. Every time I said this, Mother would promise that as soon as we reached America, I could go to school with other children too.

Tirzah was having an Armenian lesson, so Mother asked me to go after Cynthia, and if she had not delivered the note to Papa to be sure to do it and come home at once, bringing Cynthia with me.

"Don't wait to come back with your father," Mother suggested.

"Come right back so Mr. D. will know the note has been delivered. It

will take your father a little time to come out of the bath, get dressed, and come home."

I left for Bethel, feeling very important that I was assigned to an important errand. I felt like the soldier taking a message to Garcia. Mother had heard one of the American missionary teachers tell the story to a group of young people.

"It is a good lesson in teaching reliability," she had said when she repeated the story to us.

Often when we were asked to do an errand, she would remind us, "Remember the message to Garcia."

Now, as the messenger to Garcia, I was headed for Bethel, not knowing how important it was that I find Papa as soon as possible. I headed for the entrance to the bath. The day was Men's Day as the mixed sexes were never allowed in the bath. In fact, had this not been a private bath, it would not have been used for both men and woman, even on different days. The baths in the city were either men's baths or women's baths.

I found Cynthia sitting outside the bath entrance.

"Have you delivered the note?" I asked.

"I couldn't find the man," Cynthia answered.

I snatched the note from her hand, feeling very important, and walked inside to look for the attendant. The attendant was sitting on a stool, dozing. I could see that Cynthia had not even gone in. The man awakened when he heard me say, "Where is our father?"

He recognized Cynthia who went to school there everyday.

"What do you want him for?" he asked curiously.

"We have a note for him," I replied.

"I'll take it in for you," he offered.

I thought of the message to Garcia.

"No," I said. "I want to give it to him myself."

I could not tell whether he was amused or displeased. He disappeared. We thought he went to look for Papa. It seemed we waited a long time and he did not return. I got impatient. I imagined more and more that I was the messenger sent to find General Garcia. I took Cynthia by the hand and walked into the bath. I thought the men would wear bath suits like the women did. How

should I know they bathed in the nude?

When the men saw two little girls walk in, they screamed and dashed into the private compartments within the outer foyer where they were relaxing in the nude or smoking. The shouts of the men must have summoned the attendant from wherever he had been. Half amused and half angry, he said he would find Papa for us if we promised to wait outside. Probably he had not seen Papa because Papa didn't smoke. We didn't know whether or not we had seen any of the French officers. We didn't recognize them without their uniforms!

We waited outside, and soon Papa came out fully dressed. We gave him the note, and started to run home as Mother had instructed. Papa said something to the attendant about telling Monsieur Somebody something and before we reached home he had overtaken us. We arrived home at the same time.

While we were telling Mother what had happened, Papa went inside with the messenger. They shut the door. Apparently the messenger had not told Mother what it was all about. Men did not always trust women. After what seemed a long time, Papa and the man came out. Papa looked white.

Mother, although calm up to now, began to look worried. They talked in Armenian. That was always a bad sign. There must be something we weren't supposed to know. But Tirzah was home now and she had understood most of the conversation. We envied her.

"While you pack," Papa told Mother, "I'll go to headquarters. They must know about this."

Mother was trying to hold back the tears. She was checking to see if we were all home — Tirzah, Lydia, Cynthia, Nora, Elmas. Bedros had gone to shop. Mother said she wished she had known what was happening as she would have told Bedros to buy double of everything.

While Papa was next door at headquarters, Mother went to see Elmas in the kitchen. She asked us not to follow her but wait until Papa returned. The kitchen was about fifty yards away from the main house. When she returned, Elmas was with her, looking frightened.

"Father will be away for a few days," Mother told us. "While he is away, I will be at the hospital just in case Ben Hur comes during his absence. Elmas and Bedros will take care of you. You must never be afraid as all the nice officers next door will look after you, too."

Elmas began to cry.

"What if Bedros does not get back in time?" she asked Mother.

"He'll be back in time," Mother assured her. "We are going to ask him to live here to be with you and the children while we are away."

The questions followed.

"Where is Papa going? Why are you going to the hospital now?"

Ben Hur was not expected until the end of January or first of February, and it was not even January 8th yet—Cynthia and I knew, because that was the day of our birthday party.

"I may be back before he is born," Mother replied, "but Papa thinks I should be in the hospital while he is away."

"But where is Papa going?" we asked anxiously.

"The Citizens Committee needs a brave man to go on an errand. Since there is no time for Papa to find someone, he has offered to go himself. There will be other brave men to go with him."

We still did not know where he was going and why.

Papa returned with one of the officers.

"Don't be afraid," Papa reassured us. "The officers have agreed to unlock the gate between our yard and headquarters so if you need anyone, you can go there without leaving the yard."

There was more talk, all of which we could not understand. But gradually we gathered that trouble was ahead. Shooting might start soon.

"Is the French army leaving?" Elmas asked.

"No, thank heavens," Papa said, said. "They have no such orders—yet."

When Bedros returned with his shopping errands, there was more private talk with him. He said he would stay with us, but would like to let his mother know that he would not be home for a few days.

"You can accompany us to the hospital and then go home to let

your family know," Father said.

"Mother completed packing. We gathered for our evening prayer even though it was not yet evening. She kissed us all and she and Papa and Bedros left for the hospital. The hospital was practically across the street from our house.

The Americans had been judicious in planning their building program. The college, the orphanage, and the hospital were all in the outskirts of the city and all within walking distance of one another. When trouble came, it was not necessary to go to the heart of the city where most of the Turks lived. It was also easier to escape to the mountains. In the years to come, I wondered if they had known all this. But at the time, I was too young to think of such matters.

When Papa returned from the hospital, he told Elmas and us a little bit more of what was going on.

"You should know and be careful," he said. "Shooting may start before I get back. Mother will be safe in the hospital and if Ben Hur comes, she will have the necessary care. Take everything you need downstairs when the shooting starts. The high wall will protect you from bullets if you always stay downstairs. Take the mattresses downstairs and sleep in the basement rooms. I may be back before the trouble starts, but if I am not, one of the French soldiers will always be keeping an eye on this house. In fact, some of them may come here to stay to watch the other side of the street. I am sure you will be all right."

To Elmas, he added that Bedros would come back with more groceries and that we should have enough provisions for several weeks, although the trouble cannot possibly last that long, as long as the French army is in the city."

Bedros came back, bringing his old mother. Papa said that was a fine thought. She would be welcome and wished he had time to go after his own mother, although she was living with another son and his family and probably would not want to come. She was a very retiring and bashful woman. She always smiled at us but never said more than a few words, like, "How are you, dear?" Her husband, our paternal grandfather, had been shot during an earlier massacre. She

had never stopped mourning for him, people used to say, and she lived quietly for the day when she, too, would join him. She was proud of her son, Aram, and his family but never showed her pride by words, but by the tranquil look on her sad face.

We found it hard to fall asleep that night. Before midnight, several men came, armed and on horseback. Papa and Bedros prepared Paganini for the trip. The men did not leave all at once. They left one at a time and talked about meeting at a certain place. By midnight, everyone had left.

Bedros' mother knelt down and prayed for a long time. We could not go to sleep. We listened to every word she said. This was the first time in our lives that neither Mother nor Papa was home. We had gone visiting before and had felt homesick at first, but this was the first time we were home without either parent. Papa used to go away quite often but we always had Mother with us. Mother was not far away now, but it seemed far to us.

In the morning everything seemed to be normal. There was no shooting. We played in the yard, but Papa had left orders that we were not to go to school. Cynthia was disappointed because she wanted to talk about her birthday party at school. But Nora was glad she did not have to go because she didn't like her teacher.

"She sticks pins in my hand," she had told Mother. Mother could not believe it until she saw Nora's hands.

"What happened?" Mother asked.

"I think the teacher was angry because I didn't cry when she hit me with a ruler," Nora said nonchalantly.

"What did you do then?" Mother asked.

"I told her she was a bad woman and all the children laughed," Nora said, dismissing the whole incident.

Nora was not going to school today, we felt sure, and maybe the teacher would be happy, too.

Papa was gone almost a week. One day two men from the Citizens Committee came and said they would wait until Papa returned. We were glad, thinking that it must be time for him to come, although he had told us he did not know when he would be back.

The two men talked freely in our presence, thinking we knew

why Papa was away. What we could not understand, Tirzah would explain when the men were not watching. The Turks had heard that the French army would leave soon so they were organized and ready for the massacre to end all massacres. According to their plans, there would not be one Armenian or Christian left in the city. The Armenians had found out about the plot and wanted to be ready with ammunition because there was none to be had in the city.

The Turks had been getting ready for such a day, while the Armenians had left their welfare in the hands of the army of occupation. After the withdrawal of the English army and the difficulty the Armenians had in begging for a replacement, the Armenians were not going to take a chance that the French army might leave.

A scout had been sent to find where guns and ammunition could be had. When he returned, it was planned that about a dozen reliable young men would undergo the trip to bring the ammunition in the dead of night. All they needed was a leader to guide them. Papa had offered his services. Mother, of course, was very much upset but how could she ask him not to when the lives of so many were at stake.

Often during the night we would be awakened by the neighing of Mozart. He must have sensed that something was wrong. He probably missed Paganini. Once during the week Bedros took Mozart to the city and brought back more groceries. Some Turks had asked where Aram Effendi was. They had missed his daily entrance to the city riding on Paganini. Could they suspect that something was up? Bedros was very wise in his reply.

"Aram Effendi is a happy man," he had said. "His wife is expecting at any moment and he is at her side. It will be a proud man when he has a son."

Bedros had been very pleased with his clever reply until he heard someone in an undertone remark that there would be one more gjaour for the end of their swords. Bedros had pretended he did not hear this and proudly ridden on, not showing his dampened spirits. At least, he told the men who had come to wait for Papa, he

knew how the wind was blowing. The rumors must be right.

"Of course they are right," one of the men answered.

At the end of about a week, we were awakened about midnight by the noise of gunshots.

"It has begun," we thought. "If only Papa were home."

Cynthia and Nora were still asleep but Tirzah and I got up to find out what had happened. An officer from the headquarters next door was in the cellar room that had been prepared in case we had to move downstairs.

Papa and his men were expected back any day and the Turks must have known this. Although the French army had nothing to do with the plan of the Armenians in trying to secure ammunition, they did not try to stop them. They were co-operative in saying they would do all within regulations to protect any Christians in danger.

When shots were heard, the general had sent a soldier to our house to see if Papa was back. Then we heard more shots at a distance. Elmas and Bedros went upstairs and brought Cynthia and Nora down, even though they were still asleep. We all planned to stay downstairs for the rest of the night. Although the first shots seemed in the distance, one shot sounded so close that we thought it must have been right in the yard. Then we heard footsteps. Papa was home!

The last loud shot we heard had killed Paganini. But thank God, not Papa. His men had returned and were home safely, their errands done.

Papa had felt someone following him from the point where he had left the other men after they had hidden the guns and bullets. The shot had hit Paganini and when the horse dropped, Papa had dropped with him. The Turk, thinking he had hit his human target, had fled. Papa had lain down for a while until he could lift his head enough to see if anyone was around. Then he had taken a chance and walked home. It had been a narrow escape.

The next morning the Armenian men from the city left, glad to know that one mission had ended successfully and praying that the future would be all right also. They thanked Papa and he said he had fine young men with him, brave beyond imagination. Papa told

them he would find a way of keeping them informed if he found out that the French army would really withdraw. There were rumors that the Turks were ready to surrender because of the French army presence.

Papa's first errand that day was to go to see Mother. He wanted her to know that he was back safely. She did not think to ask about Paganini so he did not tell her. She had, of course, heard the shots too but he said there had been a few shots exchanged but that if trouble really began, at least they were prepared if the skirmish did not last too long. He persuaded her to stay at the hospital just in case anything should materialize. He promised her we would all live downstairs so that we would be safe from bullets aimed at the house, if that came about.

The next day there was some shooting down in the city. By evening the shooting became heavier and nearer. Cynthia was anxious to know about her birthday party. It was January 8, my birthday, too, and today was January 8.

Papa sent word to the orphanage that there would not be a party today but that after the trouble was over he promised we would have an even better party.

Then Papa went upstairs and warned us not to follow him. He said he was going to draw the blinds so that the men could go up there, if needed, to watch the streets. Soon after he was up there, the house began to be riddled with bullets. Unless whoever was firing stood on the stone wall, they could not shoot into the house below the wall. Someone must have seen the blinds being drawn and began to shoot. Papa ran down after the last blind had been drawn but he had a very narrow escape. One bullet had just missed him.

As soon as he came down, he went to headquarters next door. They were sending scouts to the French government officials at Adana to report the skirmish that had begun. Papa waited there until the reply came. The French in Marash had been instructed not to take part in the fight unless the French soldiers themselves were threatened by the Turks.

Papa was furious.

"Cold-blooded men," he said, referring to the men at the Adana French headquarters.

The French officers and soldiers who really knew what was happening were kinder and assured Papa that they would help if the need arose.

In the meantime, messengers came from the city to report the numbers of Armenians who had been killed and to find out what the French Army was going to do about it.

Days went by with two sides shooting-Turks and Armenians. The French did nothing.

Sometimes there would be a lull for hours, sometimes for a whole day. But at night there was always shooting. We could not tell whether both sides were shooting aimlessly or somewhere there was organized fighting.

The Citizens Committee had scouts coming from the city every day, bringing news and taking back news. Papa seemed to be liaison officer between the French headquarters and the Citizens Committee in the city.

One day news reached us that two of the Armenian teachers who taught at the college had attempted to leave their homes in order to escape to the college grounds but had been shot. I was heartbroken to hear about it as one of the teachers was one of my tutors. I used to admire her because she was beautiful and had been to Paris and used to wear beautiful picture hats.

One day it poured so hard that one could not see across the street. There was no shooting that day; one could not see well enough to shoot. When the rain finally stopped the next day, several Armenians had climbed their roofs to fix leaky sections using a hand roller as was the custom to pack down gravel and dirt into a hard mass. They had been welcome targets for the Turks who had been waiting for such an opportunity. Every one of the Armenians had been shot.

Armenians were angry, waiting for revenge. A Turkish neighbor next door to our house had found it necessary to fix his roof also. As soon as he appeared, he was shot instantly, presumably by an Armenian, because everyone knew which were Turkish houses and

which Armenian. He was at the edge of the roof when he was shot. He had toppled over and fallen off the roof into the yard of an Armenian. Unfortunately, Christians are not immune from the spirit of revenge and some Armenians, thirsty for such an occasion, were glad to know that one of the most cruel Turks of the city had been killed. They ran to the yard of the Armenian where the body lay. They were happy to have an opportunity to seek vengeance. They returned boasting that they stepped and jumped on his body, justifying their actions as retribution.

Tirzah and Cynthia had followed a few men who left our yard to see what had happened to him and to give vent to their own feelings. I generally wanted to do everything Tirzah did and so often would envy her ability to run fast. I could never win a race with her. When I refused to go, Cynthia had seized the opportunity to go with her. Here was a chance for her to do something her older sister did not or could not do. I don't know where Papa was during this episode but it seemed there was no one to stop them from going.

When they returned, they joined the older people in boasting of their "adventure." I didn't even feel envious that I had missed something. It just hit the pit of my stomach. "You weren't so brave," someone said to me. But I did not feel like emulating such bravery.

I was getting tired of the seclusion and the fears everyone was voicing. At night I used to think, "What will happen tomorrow this time? Where will we be? Will the shooting stop? How will it feel to sleep through the night without hearing shots, wondering who was getting killed?"

But somehow I felt safer at night because I used to think Papa was downstairs with us, too, and could not be seen as a target. So many times someone had to sneak upstairs to tear him away from the windows. The house was already riddled with bullets. If only he would stay downstairs.

I soon found out that half the night he was at the headquarters of the French officers next door. On one or two occasions he had offered to scout around in the middle of the night to see if the Turks were digging trenches nearby for a surprise "landing."

How comforting not to know everything! Mother was so near yet so far. She must be lying in bed day after day, wondering what was happening across the street. There were no telephones. At first Papa had gone to see her every night under the shield of darkness. She had begged him not to take such chances. The bullets whizzing by could find an easy target. For a while he kept his promise. Then he started to visit her again, making the excuse that he wanted to know when "Ben Hur" had arrived. Mother promised she would find some way of letting him know when that happened, but only if he would promise not to take such chances.



CHAPTER 9

Days of Anxiety

The days of anxiety continued. Every now and then a courier would come from the city proper, always with tales of woe. So-and-so had been shot. Someone's house had been set on fire and those who fled were mown down by Turkish guns. It was easier to die from a bullet than to be burned to death. The Armenian couriers wanted to get news from headquarters. Was more military help going to come? The "help" we had was not helping. The French army was doing nothing to stop the massacre. They had instructions to bide their time and not "meddle" in this local fight. The army of occupation was occupying itself watching and waiting, waiting for further instructions—instructions so far telling them to just wait.

About a mile away from the headquarters and our house was the French barracks, at the foot of the mountain range around Marash. We could see the mountains, the barracks, and the American college from our house. The American college was between the barracks and our house. All the buildings, including our house and the house in which the French officers were billeted, had high stone walls. We were safe from flying bullets as long as we remained below the height of the stonewalls — until the enemy chose to force themselves through the gates or jump over the walls.

Although we had seen airplanes in Tarsus, so far we had not seen any here. Once or twice we thought we heard a plane, but never saw one.

By the end of two weeks of the warfare, the number of people in our household had increased. Some of them were couriers who had been sent to find out what was going on. While they were waiting

for news to take back, they remained with us. At least while they were inside, their chances of being shot were more remote. They were willing to venture back only if they could take good news or any news at all. It was this waiting, waiting that was making people impatient and anxious. When their food supplies ran out, what then? Who would dare go out to the marketplace? Some of the store owners themselves did not dare walk across the street to their stores, even to stores that had not yet been pillaged by the Turks.

Each day new couriers would arrive to find out what had happened to the ones sent out before. They brought more news than they could take back. They always brought news that some more Armenians had been killed and young women outraged. On such occasions the men had been killed while fighting the attackers of the women. The only good news for any of the Committee was that the French army had not yet received orders to withdraw.

The American hospital where Mother was confined was on the road between our house and the road that led to the city proper. Most couriers stopped there on the way to see Papa. They counted on Papa to intercede for them, to persuade the head of the occupying troops to bring this massacre to a just end. The French general even allowed Papa to read the telegrams that came from headquarters in Paris. Papa could see for himself that the army of occupation could give no help without disobeying orders. Their men were restless, too. They would rather fight than just wait and wait for more orders telling them to wait and wait some more.

Then, all the telegraph lines were cut.

We were fortunate to be on the outskirts of the city, even though we were under the protection of an army that did not have the authority to protect us. We were safe if we just stayed "underground," and did not venture to the upper floors through which we could hear the bullets flying.

In the city where the houses were close together, the Turks would just walk in and shoot or knife the occupants and take the spoils. The Turks were better prepared with weapons than the Armenians who had been told not to carry arms and to try to live peacefully. But only those who had died were now living peacefully.

Those who had lost their loved ones had only one prayer left—to join them.

Fortunately, at times like this there are always those whose hearts are filled with hope. They were the ones who dedicated themselves to the task of fighting to the end—to saying all they could to help. These brave couriers were the only links between the anxious Christians in the city and news of possible help from five thousand new French soldiers just a few miles away who could help and wanted to help.

But politicians in London and Paris had other plans. What plans?

No one knew, not even the politicians probably. They were probably busy making plans for continued peace. After all, had they not just celebrated an Armistice? They could not hear the cries and heartbreaks of a few thousand people in a city far away, even though telegrams had been exchanged before the lines were cut. These telegrams were just words, they could not see the bloodshed. Maybe they tried to forget the bloodshed they had seen only too recently in the war they had just won. They could surely see the veterans of a war just ended, armless, legless, eyeless. Maybe they were too busy thinking of what to do about them. How could they think of a suffering people farther away?

But if they did not plan to help a people who had already suffered so much, why did they send an army of occupation? The only logical answer the Armenians of Marash could think of was probably the right answer — Paris and London were playing a game of chess and Marash was one of the pieces on the chess board. There would be other chess pieces soon when the Turks found out that while the game was being played, they could kill Armenians again.

It was nearly a week since the first shot had been fired. But God had not forgotten this city. He made Himself felt by sending one of the worst snowstorms in the history of the city.

“The last such storm,” I heard someone say, “was about twenty years ago.”

Soon this city of fire became a veritable picture of beauty. The steeple tops of the Christian churches and the minarets of the

Moslems shone with a whiteness as if mocking the black hearts under the white blanket.

But the shooting went on. It was even more dangerous now for couriers to venture out. They made fine, clear silhouettes cast between the whiteness below and the cold, clear skies above. How much easier for a bullet to find them.

Then on such a night came another courier. He had stopped at the hospital to visit a sister who had been shot but fortunately reached the hospital in time for help. He had started out with a note for Papa from the "underground" committee.

"If something is not done soon," the note had said, some of the Armenian leaders in the city would be compelled to gather all the women and children they could into the churches and fight back. Up to now they had been patient, tried not to provoke new fights. But during this waiting their families were being killed. If help was not forthcoming, they would have to take matters into their own hands. They wanted news from headquarters:

"Has the army decided to help yet? Would more help come from the outside?"

What could Papa say? The answer had not changed. He asked the courier to wait. He would ask the general again. Just as Papa started to walk toward the gate which led to the officers' quarters, the courier remembered to say,

"Oh, I also have good news for you. I just stopped at the hospital. You have a son and both mother and son are fine."

I think everyone was thinking the same thing—what this news would have meant had it come at a time when one was thinking of living instead of dying. There were a few congratulations. Some one whispered bitterly, "one more Christian for the bloodthirsty Turks." No one paid any attention to this but everyone was thinking the same thing.

The only happy note came from us children. When we jumped and clapped a refulgent smile crossed Papa's face.

"Ben Hur," he said.

The courier said, "Do you have a message for me to take to the hospital? I am going to stop there again on my way back to the city."

"Thank you," Papa said, "but I am going there myself as soon as I can get a message for you to take to the city."

A few of the people tried to persuade Papa not to take such a chance.

"This young man got through. I guess I can go to see my wife and son," he said.

"Please let them come home, Papa," we begged. "We won't even mind if Ben Hur does not bring us any gifts."

Probably the gifts were already in the house but this was no time to think of a celebration. If only Mother could come home and bring the baby nothing could make us happier.

I don't know where all the people came from but it seems there were more people in our house every day. Those who had escaped from the city found this their first refuge. After all, right next to us were all the officers, guards with arms-and the now-useless telegraph instruments.

"Poor man," someone said after Papa left with the courier. "All his life he has been waiting for a son and now that he has a son, and like all of us he is wondering if he will live to enjoy him."

Someone else said a prayer.

Papa was gone a long time. When he came back he seemed happy. Mother was fine and he had seen his son. The joy which he could not hide and his optimism for a bright ending to the present situation was contagious. For the first time in a month there was an air of hope in the atmosphere.

"Maybe you have good news from next door, too?" someone asked. "What about the last courier? What message will he take back from the French?"

"No help from there yet," Papa answered, "but they think if we are patient the Turks will run out of ammunition."

Maybe Papa was only telling us what we wanted to hear, but somehow there was less shooting during the next few days. Papa even suggested that we surprise Mother by all going to see her. Some friends raised their eyebrows to this suggestion.

"I've watched for a whole day," Papa said, "and there has been no shooting in that direction at all."

We were all for it, of course.

"Yes, please," we begged. "We can run fast."

"We'll wait another day," Papa said, "and if there is no shooting while the couriers or anyone else crosses the road to the hospital, we'll take a chance."

We were so happy not only because we were going to see our new brother but we had missed Mother so much. She had left the first week in January, and it was now the first week in February. Ben Hur had been born on January 30.

The next day, in broad daylight, Papa crossed the field that separated our house from the hospital. We peeked to see that he got across without any mishaps. There was no shooting. In about two hours we saw him returning. We peeked through the gate as we did not yet dare go upstairs to watch from a window. He came back seeming to be happy.

"Now, I think it will be all right for you to go," he said.

He said that Tirzah should run across the field first. I was to follow next, holding Cynthia by the hand. Elmas was to come next, holding Nora by the hand. He said he would watch from the officers' headquarters.

We were too excited and a little too young to realize the full danger of the adventure. The others in the house did not seem to give their full consent but Papa seemed to have confidence that all would be well.

Papa went to the gate with us and joined the French soldier on guard at the gate. They both watched us cross the field. It seemed we were there in no time. And there were no shots yet. Papa must have had a lot of confidence in God. The hospital gate was closed but not locked. Just a gentle push opened it. People who had escaped from the city apparently were living in the yard and no attempt was being made to keep people out of this house of refuge. Some people recognized us. The watchman seemed to know who we were. He told us in which direction to go to find Mother.

She was in a room on the first floor. When we all ran in to find her, she seemed so surprised to see us. Apparently Papa had not told her he would allow us to come. After the kissing and hugging and a

little weeping was over, she wondered if we should take another chance and return.

"It is too dangerous yet," she said. "But now that you are here, you must see Ben Hur."

The nurse brought him in. There were other patients in the room. Some seemed too sick to notice the visitors, some were crying, others seemed to just stare into space. Some asked Elmas questions about the world outside. She just shook her head and we did not pay much attention to what she was saying as we were so excited about seeing our new brother. We thought he was the most beautiful baby in the world.

"When will you come home, Mother?" we kept asking.

"Soon, I hope, darlings," she replied.

Then we noticed the bullet-riddled wall above her bed. She looked at it too.

"That's there to prove that God is watching us right here in this room," Mother said. "I was sitting up in bed when I felt a little drowsy—a signal from God—so I lay in bed just a few seconds before a bullet came through and passed over my head. For a while we were all afraid to sit up again but there have been no bullets for a long time and I hope there won't be anymore. But you must be very careful just the same while you are returning home."

She made us promise we would not come again to see her.

"I know Papa wanted me to have a surprise, but I will tell him we must all be patient until the danger is over."

We wanted to stay longer but we knew we must not. While we were getting ready to leave and kissed her goodbye, her fears seemed to rise again. She looked at Elmas, wishing assurance from her that all would be well.

"I'll wait at the gate till they cross the field and are safe," Elmas said.

Elmas remained behind while we crossed again. Papa was at the other gate waiting for us. Still there were no shots. When we turned around to see if Elmas was following, we did not see her anywhere.

"Maybe she's afraid to come back," Nora said, but just then we saw her running across the field. She had gone to report to Mother

that all was well. God had again watched over us.

As soon as Elmas returned she said Mother had made her promise that she would persuade Papa not to let us do this again.

"Maybe it won't be necessary," Papa said optimistically. "There has not been any shooting for several days."

We were happy that night. We had seen Mother, we had seen Ben Hur, there had been no shooting. Maybe everything would be all right again in a few days. We went to bed happy. Maybe tomorrow or the day after we could go upstairs and sleep in our regular beds instead of on mattresses in the basement rooms.

Just as we were going to bed, a French soldier came to say the General wanted to see Papa.

"Maybe this is the good news," everyone thought.

While we knelt to say our bedtime prayer with thankful hearts, we heard excitement outside. We heard Papa summoning all the couriers he could.

"Every priest and minister must get the news at once!" he said. "The French General here has kept his promise to let me know every move. He has just received orders that to avoid the loss of life among the French soldiers, he and his troops must leave the city in the middle of the night and escape before the Turks have a chance to find out what has happened."

Papa told the couriers, "When the Turks find out what has happened, the real massacre will begin. Up to now they thought the French soldiers were probably waiting till the Turks ran out of ammunition. That's why they probably have not been shooting lately. We will be at their mercy in a few hours. Not one Christian will be left alive. Tell the leaders of the Citizens Committee, the priests, and the ministers to gather their flock as fast as they can. Those who wish to leave the city with the army may do so. I've told the General that is what I am going to do. He is sympathetic but cannot give his consent, but he will not stop anyone from following the army out of the city."

The last courier who had come then told Papa that he better leave with his family as his name was among the first that the Turks would kill. "Everyone must hear about this," Papa told the courier,

"and make their own decision. It is too great a responsibility for the leaders to make. Those who want to go should be allowed to go. Those who don't want to go must take their chances. Most likely the prominent leaders and the rich ones would be the first victims."

Papa came to us. "I am going to the hospital to spread the news and find some more couriers, and to talk with Mother."

To Elmas, he said, "You get the children ready for a long trip. I think I know what our family will have to do but I don't know if Daisy can make such a trip only ten days after Ben Hur's birth. I'll come back as soon as possible."

It seemed hours before he got back. When he came back, Mother and Ben Hur were with him. Mother insisted that we must leave the city with the retreating troops. Papa tried to review all the hazards. The mountainous terrain, the bitter cold and snow. Her weak condition. The ten-day-old baby, the young children.

"At least we have a little hope of reaching safety if we leave," Mother replied. "If we stay, it will mean death to us all."

"Maybe you and the children can hide with Miss Blakely," Papa suggested. "The college will be the first place they will search," Mother replied, and Papa had to agree she was right. That reminded him that a courier must be sent to the college. Maybe some of the American teachers might want to leave. They had not been spared during the war just ended. Someone offered to take a message to Miss Blakeley.

"Now, what can we take?" Papa asked.

"Only bare necessities," Mother reminded him.

The war just ended was too fresh in the memory of those concerned with this present attempt to escape. Too many had seen or heard of people trying to save their worldly possessions only to have them confiscated on the road or becoming too weak to carry even the gold that might save them if and when they reached safety.

Mother and Elmas went upstairs and brought down all the jewelry. We wore all the bracelets and necklaces Mother had bought in Aleppo.

"They might come in handy someday," she had prophesied when the jewelry was bought. They would be comparatively easy to carry.

Each one of us wore several necklaces and several bracelets.

All the money Papa had was in gold- the money he had brought with him and the money he had acquired by the sale of some of his vineyards. He had not sold all his vineyards when he had decided to wait until spring to go to America. But then the massacres had broken out. There were no reliable banks in the city. He had invested a very small amount in a bank in France and he had taken up a little life insurance with a French firm in Paris. Outside of this comparatively very small investment everything he had was in cash — in gold.

The gold would be far too heavy to carry. The mountainous terrain through which we were to travel would, under ordinary conditions, take days to reach the first railroad station. As soon as the Turks heard of the attempted escape of the French army, they would send their soldiers to cut off main highways. If that happened, there would be hand-to-hand fighting.

Mother and Papa decided they would take a small amount and bury the rest in the yard. They confided in two neighbors who had decided not to leave the city because they were not prominent citizens and hoped they might be spared. They also promised Papa that they would see that his mother and relatives would benefit from all the provisions we were leaving behind, though the chances of survival under such hazardous conditions were doubtful.

Even though the outlook for freedom and recovery of lost possessions was not at all bright, hope is the last thing that dies in man. So our gold, our oriental rugs, the family album, possessions not replaceable by gold were left behind. Someday maybe these friends who had seen where the gold was buried, if they survived, would have enough not only for their immediate needs and the needs of relatives left behind, but they might even have enough left to send or bring to us if we and they survived. But that is another story.



CHAPTER 10

The Exodus

Our most immediate concern was to prepare for the journey ahead, not to think of “afterwards what?”

We had not come to Marash prepared to stay for the winter, or even if winter came, to meet a winter that was the worst in the memory of those who had lived there all their lives. And now it had begun to snow again. We wore all the warm clothing we could put on. All our buried gold could not buy the right type of boots for a venture which even at this hour, we could not imagine. We had come for the summer and had expected to leave in the fall. We were prepared for mild weather traveling. Our clothing would have been sufficient for an ordinary winter. But this was not an ordinary winter.

The worst snow storm in twenty years, people were saying. Why? God watches even over a sparrow, but why would he send such a storm? Who could survive travel if this storm kept up? We did not even know what route we were to take. Any route would be mountainous but rumors were rampant that we would take the most mountainous routes because that was the route the retreating French army was taking. We would have to follow the French army if we wanted protection.

It was rumored that there were five thousand soldiers in the retreating army. [French military archives record that the contingent inside Marash on that night consisted of 3,000 officers and men.] There would be that many, if not more, civilians following them. Can ten thousand people hide? Surely, trouble was ahead. But since remaining behind was certain death to our family, we would take a

chance. Survival was possible but was it probable? Only God knew the answer. We would try.

We did not know just at what hour of the night the troops would leave. Papa said even remaining in our house was not safe. When we were ready, as ready as it was possible for us to be, he took us all to the general's quarters next door.

Everyone was kind to us. The officers seemed calm, I thought, except that they were talking too fast. I was trying to understand a few French words – maybe they would say “*ferme la porte*” or “*ferme la fenêtre*” or even maybe “*ferme la bouche*.” I could not make out anything. I was getting drowsy. I wished I could be in bed but it seemed so good to have Mother with us.

Mother was talking in French to the men in uniform.

“What did he say?” we kept asking her. “What did you ask him?”

Everyone was looking at the baby.

“They want to know how old the baby is,” Mother said. “Ten days,” she had told them.

Some shook their heads, others seemed indifferent. Some of the officers we knew by name. They had spent much time with us during the “peaceful days.” There were Jean and Pierre who had shown us pictures of their sweethearts back home in France. Mother had special table clothes hand made for them. I wondered if they would remember to take them. I started to ask Mother about it, but just then Papa walked in.

Papa had gone out for a few minutes to find more messengers to send to the city. He felt he must do his best to have everyone notified, whether they decided to remain or join the retreating army. It was his last duty, he felt, although they must make the decision.

Papa had bargained with Bedros to take care of Nora. She was too young to walk. Elmas would take care of Ben Hur as Mother was too weak. Papa had offered to pay gold at the end of the trip in addition to what they had already paid them for their promise to be responsible for Ben Hur and us until we reached the first railroad station.

We did not know how long that would take as we did not know

what routes would be followed or how long the stops would be. We would start and stop with the army. The General had not refused to allow this civilian army to follow him. He was a kind man but he was also shrewd enough to know that he could not stop five thousand men, women, and children unless he used brutal force and weapons.

The problem of Ben Hur and Nora had been settled for the time.

"What about you?" Papa said to Mother. "Surely, you must not attempt to walk. It will be for several days, at least, and not a pleasure walk, but mountain climbing. The infantry division of the army of occupation is planning to start out with their horses. We can try taking your Mozart. I will lead him while you ride him."

"But what about those steep climbs in the mountain?" Mother asked. "Maybe the army horses can lead the way. If they can make it, we can. At least, we will try," he replied.

That left Tirzah, Cynthia, and me.

"I think Tirzah and Lydia can walk," Papa said. "They can remain close to us and I will watch them."

He was doubtful about Cynthia. She was too old to be carried and too young to walk.

"Maybe she can ride with me on Mozart," Mother said.

"We will try it," Papa decided.

An officer came to whisper something to Papa and he disappeared again. It must have been after midnight by now. We were losing track of time except that someone always asked what time it was and someone always answered.

When Papa returned we hardly could recognize him. He was wearing a French officer's uniform. He said something to Mother in Armenian. We teased her to let us know. She said if we promised not to talk about it, she would tell us. We knew that a promise to Mother must be kept and we were willing to keep our promise.

Mother said the French General had been very kind and thoughtful to offer a uniform to Papa so that if we should encounter Turks they might not notice who he was and it would be safer for him and us. Just as I was really dozing off, there was commotion and we learned we must leave now for the barracks where the

French soldiers were billeted. It was just beyond the American College for Girls.

Bedros had prepared Mozart for Mother who mounted her horse. Elmas had Ben Hur bundled in her arms. We had trouble with persuading Nora to be carried by Bedros. She said she wanted to walk as she had never seen snow before. Papa said she could walk until we got to the barracks but that she must not let go of Bedros's hand. Tirzah, Cynthia and I followed Mother for the ten-minute walk to the barracks.

At first it seemed fun to be out after having been imprisoned so long in the house. But soon it became colder than I had ever known. As we passed the college yard towards the barracks, Mother saw some of the American teachers and their families riding toward the barracks also.

"Where is Miss Blakely?" she asked.

"She has decided to remain with her girls," someone replied, "but she insisted that we leave."

The Americans were riding in a cart drawn by mules. They asked how we were going to manage. Mother said we were pretty well organized but she was not sure about Cynthia. They insisted that they could crowd her into their cart. Cynthia was stubborn and would not go. She insisted she wanted to remain with Mother. It was hard for Mother to make a decision.

"We might not see her till the end of the trip," she said to Papa. But Papa felt she should go. Cynthia cried and fussed but finally got in with them.

"We will take good care of her," they said and Mother thanked them. She told Cynthia that if she said her prayers she would be all right and we would probably see her each night.

Papa seemed a little relieved to have Cynthia taken care of. Tirzah and I tried to act brave and grown up. I had always envied Tirzah because she could run so much faster than I could. Now I was on an equal footing, and "footing" it really was. I did not know what was yet to come.

When we reached the outskirts of the city and saw thousands of civilians mixed in with the uniformed soldiers, we wondered how

they had reached there so soon. They must have just run from their homes without preparations. The news must have spread fast.

It began to snow even harder. It was not only the white snow that made it seem almost daylight. I realized, shivering, that all eyes were looking toward the city.

The city was on fire!

"That's the First Church burning!" someone cried.

"And the Second Church. And the Catholic Church. The Third Church. The Gregorian Church. The School house."

"But they are full of people. The Christians went there to hide," someone cried.

Now and then someone could be heard sobbing. All families had not left as a whole. Some fathers had left without the rest of the family. Some families had lost one another while escaping the city. They were looking at every face to see if it was a member of their family.

"How thankful we should be," Mother said. "At least we are all starting out together. Some poor families are lost before even starting."

It was hard not to watch a burning city. Every time a steeple would topple, there would be more sobbing around us. Inside those burning churches were human beings, their dear ones watching, helplessly, on the outskirts of the city. Then a minaret would be seen burning. There must be retaliation, but there was no satisfaction in such revenge. With the city so well lighted, we could now see hundreds of people running back and forth. We could even hear screaming and shooting.

In the ten minutes which we had traveled from our home to the barracks we had already started to climb. Our house, already on the outskirts of the city, looked down into the valley. The college was a little higher than our house. The barracks a little higher than the college. It was like being in the balcony of a theater, looking down into the stage of the city, watching a drama from which I wanted to run away.

It was getting colder and colder. I tried to imagine how hot it must be in the burning city. Already a few cinders were reaching us.

The light from the holocaust was so strong, we could see the faces of the soldiers carrying their packs, coming out of the barracks in front of us. They were forming a line. We were getting ready to go. Turning from the burning city, I looked up to see where there might be a road—the road we might take. There were only mountain ranges.

“How can we get up there?” I thought.

There is something about childhood that one can never appreciate until one is no more a child. When there is a problem, there is always Father or Mother who can answer it. When one has reached a milepost where he must make a decision, one is no longer a child, regardless of age. So often as a young child when I used to ponder whether or not it would be good to grow up, I always thought it must be difficult to be a grownup, to make decisions like fathers and mothers must make.

Just now I was so glad I did not have to decide which road to take. I could not see any roads. All I could see was a burning city in front of me and high mountain peaks covered with snow in back of me. And I was cold. I tried to imagine being in my warm bed. I imagined someone asking what I wanted most from life. I knew the answer—“a warm bed.”

I wondered if the Turks were sleeping in it now. I tried to pray, not realizing that I was not even trying—I was just praying. One just prays without deciding to pray. There is no such thing as deciding to pray, I thought. When one needs to pray, one just prays. I was praying for a warm bed, for us all to reach safety. Then I wondered if I was selfish for praying for a warm bed when there were people around me crying because their families had been separated before they even began their exodus to parts unknown.

I was awakened from my reverie by Papa's voice.

“Well, we are ready to go,” he said as if rounding us up for a picnic. “Where is Elmas and Ben Hur, Bedros and Nora? Tirzah is here, Lydia is here. Cynthia will be all right with the American teachers.”

“I hope so,” Mother said, as Papa helped her mount Mozart.

I wondered if Mozart realized what was happening. I wondered

if animals were happier than people. I wondered if there were Turkish horses and Armenian horses and if they would fight because they were not the same. I think I startled Mother by saying, "Is Mozart an Armenian or a Turk?"

"There are no nationalities and religions among animals," Mother said. "In the beginning there were no divisions among people either. God did not divide them. They divided themselves."

"It is not God's fault," she added.

I remembered once overhearing her say to Papa, "Sometimes I can't tell whether Lydia is going to be deeply religious or an agnostic."

I was always questioning the ways of God. Sometimes I used to think He used poor judgment and would say so.

"When you really understand the Bible," Papa had said, "you will know that all the goodness in this world is because of God."

Mother had read the Bible through fourteen times so I thought I should do the same. I had begun to read it but the building of the Ark wore me out and I could not understand why someone was always begetting someone. It was when I had asked why God was such a terrible God that Mother had expressed her doubts. I remember spending hours with a dictionary to find out what agnostic was. I did not know where to begin. I had looked up "egg" and "eggnog," but could not connect the relationship with God.

But, then, I thought, God had His finger in everything and maybe someday I could understand. Mother was defending God again which made me wonder what would have happened if Paganini had not died. Would Mozart be happier if he had Paganini leave Marash with him. There were other horses starting on this trip but I thought he probably would feel closer to Paganini as they had shared the same stable and could be company for each other.

No matter how hard I tried to think about everything, I could not forget that it was getting colder and colder. Before I realized it, the burning city was getting farther and farther away. Then, suddenly, I realized that there were thousands of people in front of us and thousands of people behind us.

I remembered once riding on the train going to Aleppo we had

seen hundreds or thousands of goats with their shepherds leading them, climbing the mountain side. We had lost track of them when the train went through a tunnel. "Where are they going?" I had asked Mother.

"Even animals go home at the end of the day," Mother had said. "They are like people in many ways. Sometimes I think they understand us better than we understand them," she had said turning to Papa, and we had all laughed. I wondered if we would all laugh again. I tried to laugh just to see how it would feel. It sounded so silly that I made believe I was coughing.

"Are you all right?" Mother said.

"Yes," I said, "I'm just cold, that's all."

It certainly was not a lie.

"What else can I think about," I thought, "to make the time pass, to forget that I was getting tired and colder and colder, and sleepier and sleepier.

Every now and then a baby would be heard crying. I wished I were a baby. "If I were a baby," I thought, "someone would be carrying me in her arms. I would be warm and comfortable, and not tired. And maybe I would not remember all this. I would just be sleeping most of the time and by the time I woke up or grew older, we would be home, wherever home was going to be- eventually America, of course. I wondered how long it would take us to get there. I knew we would not have to walk there as we would have to cross an ocean. Then I wondered at what point we would stop walking and ride on a train. This was our first day's journey, but no one was talking yet about where to get a train. Everyone was talking about when they might meet chetehs-Turkish highway robbers during peace time, but working for the government during wartime and massacres.

At least we had an army with us and we would not have to fight alone. Someone had said something about scouts going ahead and coming back to lead the way. They would not take us through dangerous roads. There would always be a pessimist who would say the chetehs would hide while the scouts were looking around but would pounce when the crowds came by. Others would pray and

feel more confident.

As long as we had Mother and Papa with us, I really didn't feel frightened. I was just cold and tired. I was not even hungry yet but I wondered if Elmas had packed a lunch. It sounded like a picnic. I wondered if everyone brought something to eat. Everyone had packs and everyone was carrying something. Tirzah and I were not carrying anything yet. Mozart had a load and I was thankful for that.

"If it would stop snowing," I thought, "it would be a little easier to walk. The snow would not be blowing on my face." It seemed a long time since we started our march but we had not yet stopped to rest or to eat or to sleep. I did not hear anyone asking what time it was. I wished someone would so I could find out too. Some of the ladies walking near were talking in Armenian. I could not understand them but tried to make a game of picking a word here and a word there to see I would understand it.

We tried to keep together but it was not easy for Papa to control Mozart. He would slip once in a while so Papa had to have a firm hold on the reins. I don't think Mozart was used to traveling mountainous roads in snowy weather. He seemed to be breathing hard. I wondered if he was cold too. And I wondered if anyone thought of bringing something for him to eat.

Every now and then Papa would stop to see how Ben Hur was. All the ladies would ask him if the baby was all right.

"Fine," Papa would say and go back to holding Mozart's reins. For a while we had lost Bedros and Nora and Mother tried to look for them.

"She'll be all right," Papa had reassured her. "It will not always be possible for us to be in sight of one another. Sometimes when we come to narrow passages we almost have to go single file. Bedros is a strong boy. He can take care of Nora very well. And he knows the rewards at the end of the trip," he reminded Mother.

We had not seen the cart in which Cynthia was traveling since we left the burning city behind.

"We may have to take a different route," one of the American ladies had reminded Mother, "but don't worry about Cynthia. She will be all right with us."

I think I did more thinking in these last few hours of my life than I had all the years up to that time. Mother had said once when we became impatient while waiting for a late train that much of the world's greatest thinkers probably had begun to think because they were waiting for someone or something. Thereafter whenever I had to wait I tried to think of many things that I had never thought of before. I also remembered Papa's remark that if we counted slowly, every count would be a second on the watch. We used to have contests counting while Papa hid the tiny second hand of a Waltham watch Uncle Stephen had sent from America as a wedding gift to Papa. On the sixtieth count, we would shout, "Sixty!" and Papa would look at his watch to see how near we had come. Sometimes we would get a prize; at other times he would say we should not expect a prize always, that the prize was in learning.

Nora always counted too fast and skipped numbers. We older ones would take pride in teaching her to count right and slowly. We would wink at Papa sometimes so he could make believe she won once in a while. Whenever there was a thunder and lightning storm, we would count aloud to see how many miles away the electric storm was. We would wait for the peal of thunder to announce the distance of the discharge of electricity.

We knew that Benjamin Franklin had discovered electricity. At first we wondered why he alone had discovered it because when it came everyone could see and hear it, so Papa had told us the story of the kite. It was not very clear but Papa said every year when we grow older, he would tell us more about it. Again, I thought, it must be fun to grow old. Then we would know and understand everything. This thought awakened me from another reverie and when I looked to see who was next to me, I saw an old wrinkled face.

"This woman," I thought, "must be very smart because she looks so old." I had great respect for the old and often had envied them.

I thought, "What else can I think about just to pass the time."

It was long past our bedtime when we left Marash behind.

"Where will we sleep tonight?" I kept wondering if there won't be any beds. There were several blankets on Mozart. Maybe that would

be our bed. Then I started to count again. I would count to sixty and think another minute has passed. But soon I would lose count of the number of times I had counted sixty. Then I would remember I was tired. Then I would look around to see if Tirzah was near me. She was a little ahead of me but Elmas and Ben Hur were just behind me.

I really could not remember what Ben Hur looked like. We had not had a chance to get a really good look at him. Then, suddenly, I remembered all those presents that we would have had if Ben Hur had come home from the hospital—if there had been no massacre.

"The Turks will have all those presents," I thought, "or maybe our Armenian neighbors."

Then I slipped on something and fell down. Someone helped me up. I wanted to cry but not because I was hurt. I don't think I really was hurt. But Tirzah was not crying and no one else was crying so I did not cry. Not even Ben Hur was crying.

Then, just for a change I would walk with my eyes closed because someone said there was a blind man who had also left the city. I had heard someone say to Mother, "Why should a blind man want to save his life?"

Mother had replied that he probably had a more lively soul than those with eyes. She had added, "There is more than one type of blindness."

I had thought about this for a while. I wanted to ask her what other way of blindness there could be but Mother seemed a little too far away riding on top of Mozart. I would have to shout to have her hear me.

"I will ask her the first chance I have," I decided. Just now, with my eyes closed, I thought of the blind man walking. I had not seen him yet. The news had just passed around. Some had thought him brave, some foolish. I wondered if someone was helping him, holding his hands so he would know where he was going. It seemed I had walked quite a while with my eyes closed but I had not fallen yet or bumped into anyone. Then, even though my eyes were closed, it seemed there was a light coming through my lids. I opened my eyes.

Yes, just a little distance forward, soldiers in uniform were building a fire. People were stopping as they approached the fire. It seemed like arriving at a picnic spot. Someone had decided where to stop and everyone was stopping. The soldiers kept on with their business, not interfering with anyone, not telling them to stop or to go ahead.

I saw Tirzah stopping by the fire so I stopped, too. Soon Elmas came with her bundle. We had lost track of Papa and Mother.

"What if we have lost them?" I thought, trying not to act alarmed. Tirzah must have read my thoughts.

"Those on horseback had to take another road a little farther back," she said, trying to console me, and herself, too, I think.

"What about Nora?" I said.

"Everyone can't arrive all at the same time," Tirzah replied.

"Why didn't I think of that?" I wondered. Somehow Tirzah seemed to know so much more than I.

"When I am her age," I thought, "maybe I will think of more things."

The fire felt so good. Everyone tried to huddle near it but the soldiers still did not say anything. The snow around the fire was melting. Some people started to unpack blankets. Pretty soon the circle around the fire got larger and larger.

Then we heard the sound of horses' feet. A few officers were on horseback. They stopped at the fire. Even in sad and anxious moments there are moments of joy. Mozart's neighing seemed the most beautiful music I had ever heard.

"Mother!" I thought. "If that is Mozart, Mother must be coming."

Tirzah and I ran toward Mother and Papa.

"Thank God, you are all right," she said. "Where is Elmas and Ben Hur and Nora?"

She saw Elmas and Ben Hur near the fire. When we got back, we had lost our place near the fire. Elmas started to come towards us with Ben Hur. Mother motioned to her to stay there. Papa helped Mother dismount, took the blankets off Mozart, unpacked some food and said he was going back to look for Nora and Bedros.

"Do you think each time you stop you'll have the whole family

with you?" someone asked him?

"My family started out together," one man said, "but I don't expect to see them each time we stop."

"I'll try, maybe they aren't too far behind," Papa replied.

"How do you know they aren't ahead?" someone questioned.

"I think I saw them pass ahead of us," someone added.

"I saw someone away back carrying a child," someone added to the confusion.

"It must be very hard to be a father," I thought. "Now he must decide whether to go ahead or go back. How is he going to know?"

Papa did not hesitate for a moment. All he said was, "I know Bedros. If he saw a fire and people stopping, he would not keep going."

Mother's silence meant she agreed with him. Papa went back.

It seemed a long time before we saw him again—with Nora and Bedros. As soon as Nora saw Mother, she jumped off Bedros's back and ran to Mother, crying.

"He kept pinching me," she complained.

"That's all right," Mother said, "he was probably trying to keep you awake."

I don't think this had occurred to Bedros but when he heard Mother making excuses for him, the sentence he had begun changed its nature of complaint to whole-hearted agreement. I think Mother sensed this because she added, "And I hope you stayed on Bedros's back like a good little girl so you could keep him warm too."

When peace had been restored between Nora and Bedros, we realized Papa was not with us.

"Where is Aram Effendi?" Mother asked Bedros. "Aram Effendi" was a title of respect and was what the servants called Papa.

"He took the horse where the French horses are," Bedros replied.

We could never make Bedros say "Mozart." Then I wondered if the horses of the French army had come from France. I wondered if Mozart would feel strange among French horses.

Then I saw some French soldiers carrying a man in a stretcher

made from blankets. The unconscious form was in a French uniform. They brought him near the fire, laid him on the ground, and tried to revive him.

It was Papa! Before we had a chance to cry out, "Papa!" Mother pulled us all towards her and said we must not let the soldiers know he was our father. Some of the people near us kept saying, "Isn't that Aram Effendi?" Mother motioned them to stop also.

"Please," she begged them in Turkish and in Armenian, "don't let them know the man they are trying to revive is not a French officer. Because they think he is an officer, they will give him first aid and do whatever is necessary."

"That's right, that's right," I heard people saying.

Everyone now sat still watching the reviving process. One of the soldiers took out a canteen and tried to force liquid down Papa's throat. "Irakie," someone near me said.

I was shocked to think they would give dad "irakie" — whiskey. I looked at Mother to see what she was thinking.

"It's all right," she said. "It's like medicine when one is cold and when one does not take too much."

"What a strange world this is getting to be," I thought. In just a few weeks my world was changing so fast. The dreaded "irakie" about which we had learned a song in Turkish which ended "Begone, begone, thou wicked cup" was all right now.

Then I thought of the story Papa used to love to tell to show the importance of moderation. It was one of his favorite stories and he could tell it so well. It was about a young bride who cooked her first meal of rice pilav. When her husband and all the in-laws with whom it was customary for a young bride to cook, tasted it, she sensed total disappointment.

"It tastes flat," the cruel mother-in-law had been the first to break the silence. At this point Papa would digress to add that if anyone wanted to repeat the story but liked his mother-in-law, he could pick on some other member of the family to make the first cruel remark. This digression always seemed to embellish the story.

Then Papa would continue. "The poor bride, of course, began to cry. The beloved father-in-law..." Papa would go on—and then digress

again by saying that somehow if the mother-in-law was disliked, the father-in-law was always loved. "The beloved father-in-law came to the rescue of his new daughter-in-law by saying, "The pilav is fine. The only thing it lacks is black pepper."

Then, Papa would go on, the beloved father-in-law would expound on the subtle qualities of seasoning and say it was the secret that made cooking a success or failure.

"Next time," he said affectionately to the young bride, "don't forget the black pepper and you will see what a difference it will make."

This had cheered the bride and restored peace in the household.

"THEN," Papa would say, using the word with such an inflection that everyone was anxious to hear the climax, "on her next trial meal, when the pilav appeared on the table, everyone asked, "What is this?"

The bride, beaming and confident, replied, "pilav."

"But where is the rice?" the astonished father-in-law asked.

"I didn't use any rice," the blushing bride had replied. "If, as you said, a little pepper would make it taste so good, I thought if I made all of it from pepper, it would taste that much the better!"

No matter how many times I had heard Papa tell the story, I would still listen to every word. Sometimes it varied a little but it got better each time.

It seemed that this long story flashed through my mind in a second. Maybe this story had something to do with a little whiskey, I thought. And then I saw Papa open his eyes. Mother rushed to him and we followed her.

"Now that they have revived him," she said, "we can claim him."

She thanked the soldiers in French. They showed surprise but no disappointment. Maybe the thanks of a lady was the last thing they expected because of the performance of a duty.

The soldiers bivouacked for the night. We followed suit.

It seemed everyone had something to eat that night. They melted snow to quench their thirst. Not everyone had brought cups but those who had were generous in offering them to others. Even Papa accepted water from a cup which had been used by others. This

surprised me more than anything else because Papa was very fastidious about such matters. Even though it was the rule of our house that dishes must be boiled when washed, Papa had his own glass that no one was allowed to use. He could drink more water than anyone I have ever known but when we went visiting and everyone around asked for water, Papa would not drink a drop. As soon as we got home, he would make up for it with his own glass. We accepted this idiosyncrasy as a part of him. Somehow it never seemed strange to us. It was just part of Papa, that's all.

When the excitement of Papa's fainting and revival had died down, Mother took Ben Hur from Elmas and said she would take care of him for the night, that Elmas should have some relief. The baby certainly must have been hungry. Once we saw Elmas touch snow to his mouth just to see if he would wake up. Some people walking alongside of her watched, too, and said,

"He'll never survive this if the journey lasts another day."

Elmas never talked much but Tirzah said,

"We won't let him die. He will be all right."

"Of course, of course," someone tried to soothe her and I was on the verge of crying again.

Mother nursed the baby who seemed as lively and happy as if he were in a warm crib at home. When I was half asleep, using Mother's knee as a pillow, I heard Mother whisper to Papa,

"I wonder if Cynthia is all right. Thank God we are all here tonight, but I hope she is all right, too."

Papa tried to console her by saying she must not expect to see Cynthia till the end of the journey as it was not possible for those traveling by cart to use the same route. Then, half asleep, I wondered if Cynthia was crying now because she was away from the rest of the family. Then I prayed and asked God to help me make believe that I was sleeping in a warm bed, that no Turks would come in the night to kill us, that He would watch over Cynthia who was the only one away from the family! I wondered where she was right now.

So many people had stopped on this mountaintop with us. We could see endless people ahead and in a line in back. Everyone had

stopped for the night because the soldiers had stopped. Somehow we felt safer marching with the soldiers. They had arms and could protect us "if they are allowed to," I had heard someone say. Sometimes I would hear only part of a conversation, at other times I would understand only a part, and sometimes I would not understand it at all, especially if they talked in Armenian. Tirzah would listen and often could tell me what they were saying. Sometimes I felt she did not want to say everything.

We slept in the open that night. The snow flakes did not come down as fast as they had when we first started our march. I had never seen so much snow in my life. I felt at the time I never wanted to see anymore in my life. Yet when I was awakened in the morning—because everyone was getting ready to start another day's journey—the beauty of the white mountain, covered all the way to the top, could not be denied.

As soon as we awakened, we all looked at Ben Hur to see if he was all right. He seemed so warm and comfortable against Mother's breasts. Though it was hard for her to part with him, she had to let Elmas have him again for the day. She was still weak. She had to save every bit of energy for the trip. As yet, we did not know how long it would last. People were making conjectures as to where the first railroad station would be, where any trains would be going, and wherever they went, would it be safe there.

It seemed warm until I woke up. Then I remembered it was cold again. The blankets were folded and put on Mozart. It must have warmed him to have them on his back again and to have Mother ride him. He was always so gentle with her. He seemed to be happy to start out again.

"Keep close to us," Father reminded Elmas. "If we should become separated, do what you did last night—stop with the first group of soldiers who stop for the night. You will be safe with them and probably they will be able to build a fire. We will plan to stop with the first group, too. If we should get there before you, I'll walk back to try to find you. If anything should happen that we don't find one another during the night, don't worry but try to keep together and do what the soldiers do."



CHAPTER 11

*“...in the Valley of
the Shadow...”*

Our second day had begun.

“I wonder where we will be tomorrow this time?” kept racing through my mind. I was so afraid that tomorrow this time we would be doing the same thing, so I made it “next week this time.” Would we all be together? I wondered where Cynthia was now. Did she cry last night?

At first, Papa tried to hold Mozart back so we would keep together, but this seemed impossible. On certain stretches Mozart wanted to go faster. Papa, who was leading Mozart, had no trouble keeping up with him as he was such a fast walker.

Soon, Nora and Bedros were out of sight. Tirzah and I kept close to Elmas and Ben Hur. Elmas could not walk too fast which made the pace just right for me. Tirzah could walk faster but slowed down to stay with us. I tried to talk but it was too cold and windy to push the scarf off my face. I could not tell whether it was still snowing or blowing. In some places the snow seemed so high we could not tell whether it was part of the mountain. Fortunately, so many people had gone ahead of us that the snow was packed down and if we kept to this “trail,” our feet and legs did not sink in.

Sometimes I wanted to stop thinking, so I tried to listen to the people around me talk. I could not understand those who talked Armenian but tried to walk with those who talked Turkish, hoping to understand at least part of what they were saying. From what I

could make out several people were comparing this flight with their forced exile to Der-el-Zor.

"Here," someone said, "no one is whipping us. We can stop if we want to. We can go on if we want to. But on the road to the desert, when we were fainting from the heat and wanted to rest, if we showed any sign of slowing down, the Turkish gendarmes lashed us with their whips or the butts of their guns."

Then someone would say, "But you had no fear of freezing to death."

Then a reply would come, "Freezing to death is one of the easiest ways to die. No pain."

I would wonder how anyone knew she was dying if there was no pain.

When they started to talk in Armenian I was disappointed I could not understand anything else. Tirzah kept listening and I kept saying, "What are they saying now?"

"Oh, I'll tell you later if you'll keep quiet now," she promised. "I can't listen if you keep interrupting me."

Then she went to Elmas and asked if Ben Hur was sleeping.

"Don't let him sleep," Tirzah said.

"Why?" Elmas asked. "Babies sleep most of the time."

Then Tirzah whispered something else to her.

Then I heard some more ladies speaking Turkish and my attention was drawn to them.

"There would be more sickness if this were hot weather," some one was saying, "especially during encampment." Then they seemed to be discussing the benefits of snow as a purifier.

One said, "When ten thousand people stop for the night .. no latrines ... excreta ... flies ..."

I did not want to listen anymore. For the first time since we left a warm house, I almost loved the snow. I thought I was going to vomit. Then I was ashamed of myself. I had not seen anyone vomiting and I didn't want to be different. I walked away from these women. I thought maybe it would be better if I walked side-by-side with people I could not understand. Yet when I did this, the journey seemed longer.

I kept thinking of things I did not want to think.

"What if I lost everyone in the family? What if I were left an orphan?"

Then suddenly I would look around to see if I was near Tirzah, to look forward or backward for signs of Mozart, for Elmas carrying Ben Hur. I wondered what Nora was doing to Bedros, where Cynthia was now. We had not seen her for two days. I wondered if she was crying now.

"At least," I thought, "she would not be tired. She did not have to walk."

I tried to decide whether I would rather be tired and cold than be away from the rest of the family. I wished we were all together and neither tired nor cold. I wanted to postpone such a decision.

"Tirzah, where are you?" I heard myself calling.

A man behind me said, "Keep going, little girl, keep going."

I automatically stepped aside. A stranger took my hand and I began to cry.

"I am lost," I said.

It was not natural for me to speak Turkish and I had spoken to the stranger in English.

"You must be Aram Effendi's daughter," he said.

Still sobbing, I replied, "Yes, I don't know where they are."

"Just walk with me and we'll find them," he said.

Soon I saw Tirzah and Elmas ahead. Tirzah seemed to be walking backwards.

"She's trying to find me," I thought and started to run toward her. She said something to Elmas and they both stopped until we caught up with them. "Here is my sister and Diggin Elmas," I said to the man who had tried to help me.

"I think she was frightened," the man addressed himself to Diggin Elmas and Tirzah. "Now that she has found you, I'll try to find my own family."

He asked about Ben Hur.

After he walked ahead, Diggin Elmas told us about the man. "Ben Hur is the youngest baby on this march, and that man's cousin's baby is the next youngest—a month older than Ben Hur."

We had lived in his cousin's house for several summers. His niece and nephew, Alice and Pierre, were my closest playmates. I had not seen them leave Marash but now knew they must be somewhere in this great, great crowd of people. I wondered if we would ever play again with them.

"Aren't we going to stop soon?" I asked Tirzah.

"We can't stop until the soldiers do," she said. "Remember what Papa said. We must not stop until the soldiers stop."

"I don't see any soldiers," I said and it was true. It seemed hours now since I had seen a single soldier.

"I heard some of the women say we were in the middle of them," Tirzah said. "Some of them are away out in front and some of them are at the very end of the line to protect us."

I wondered how she knew all this but remembered enviously that she could understand some Armenian.

"Maybe I would know lots more," I thought, "if I could have understood some of the women who talked in Armenian."

For a while we seemed to be going downhill and it was very slippery and the lines of people seemed to be longer and longer. On a straight road it was hard to see too far ahead or too far back but when we were going uphill or downhill, there seemed to be more people. Or whenever we took a sharp turn... like seeing the locomotive and the miles of cars when a train goes around a curve. When it goes straight, it is hard to tell if there is a car ahead or behind. We used to say this often to Mother when we rode on a train. Now I wished we were on a train.

"How far is it to the train?" I asked Tirzah.

"I don't know yet where we are," she said.

Then we realized suddenly that it was dusk. We had not seen Mother and Papa since this morning.

"If the soldiers don't stop," I asked, "will we have to travel all night? I am too tired. I can't walk anymore."

"Oh, they'll stop soon," Tirzah assured me.

I was always asking questions and Tirzah was always trying to answer them. Diggin Elmas did not pay any attention to my questions. Anyway, she could not understand English very well.

Once in a while I would ask her questions in Turkish but she was so slow in answering that Tirzah always answered first.

"She is busy taking care of Ben Hur," Tirzah would say. "Don't bother her."

Diggin Elmas never talked very much to the ladies around her either. She never used to talk much at Marash. She was always very sad. Maybe because her husband and babies had been shot in her presence during the war. Maybe that is why she took such good care of Ben Hur!

As dusk was turning into darkness, the crowds in front seemed to be slowing down. Then we could see a few lights ahead.

"I think we will soon be stopping," Tirzah said, by way of good news. Then there was a new sound—the crunching of wheels on the snow and the neighing of horses.

"Mozart!" I thought, my heart beating. And it was Mozart! And Papa riding towards us!

They had reached a deserted village and found a few empty huts and barns — many corpses — and signs of pillage and plunder and, of course, murder. The soldiers had cleared away all the marks of horror and encamped for the night. Papa had left Mother under some sort of shelter. Bedros and Nora had kept up with them most of that day. Papa had turned back to find the rest of his family. He was so happy to find us. When we reached Mother, we all started to cry with joy.

"Now I must find Cynthia," Papa said, "and let her spend the night with us."

"When we find her, we will keep her with us," Mother insisted.

Before Papa had a chance to leave, we heard a few carts go by us. It was too dark to recognize anyone.

"Cynthia? Cynthia?" Mother called, hoping she would be one of the occupants of the vehicles passing us.

"Mother! Mother!" came a reply.

Often it is hard to believe a reality when it is a near miracle, but it really was Cynthia! She practically overturned the cart when she jumped to look toward the direction of the voice that had been calling her. Mrs. Lyman, who held the reins of the mule that was

leading the cart, stopped.

"Mrs. Bagdikian?" she called.

We surrounded the cart and Papa pulled Cynthia out.

"Thank you so much for taking care of our little girl," Mother and Papa were saying thanks together.

"We're stopping for the night too," Mrs. Lyman said. "Bring her back to us in the morning and she can continue to ride with us."

At this point Cynthia cried even louder than before and said she wanted to stay with us.

"But you're too little to walk such a long distance," Mrs. Lyman said. "She cried all the way," another lady said.

"Maybe she is too much trouble for you," Mother said. "I think she can ride with me on Mozart."

"We can decide in the morning," Papa said, apparently not wishing to make any definite plan at this point.

It was our second night sleeping under the cold, dark skies. It had not stopped snowing yet, but we were happy to be all together. In an attempt to collect his family, Papa had not been able to find an empty barn or hut as some people had but we had the shelter of a wall for this night.

"We are still cold but our hearts should be warm," Papa said. "How good to be all together again. Let us have our family prayers before going to sleep."

At home, the procedure for the family evening prayers always varied. Sometimes each one of us repeated a verse from the Bible and took turns saying the prayer. At other times, each one not only said the prayer for that day but also chose and read a certain selection from the Bible. When we were too young to be able to read, we could always recite a verse. Generally the youngest child recited the shortest verse—"God is love." For a long time now, this verse had been Nora's. We had not had a chance to realize that soon this verse would become Ben Hur's as Nora was no longer the youngest and that soon she would be able to read.

Tonight, however, the verse was still Nora's as Ben Hur could not even say a word yet. Nora knew the procedure. The youngest began first. Nora soon blurted out, "God is love."

This reminded me of the night I had shocked my parents as well as some guests when I had repeated, "For the Lord, thy God, is a terrible God," and without pausing, added, "That's what the Bible says." I had seen the astonished looks of the guests and my sisters and expected punishment from my parents but Mother had calmly said, "Now say the rest of it. That's not all of it."

But I could not remember the rest of it and I was ashamed. Mother had come to my rescue. She said in the morning she would explain what the Bible meant by that, that it would be much better for me not to repeat anything only partly unless I could explain what the whole meant. Thereafter, I had always checked to see if I was saying enough of a verse without having to explain the part I was leaving out—there was so much that was always left out. Then I had finally adopted as my own the 14th verse of the 19th Psalm and tonight I recited that, for I truly felt humble in the sight of God for the blessings of this evening and the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart I knew would be acceptable in His sight.

Mother recited the 23rd Psalm. In the joy of being united again the cold snow upon which we were to lie down seemed truly to be green pastures. We were indeed walking through the valley of the shadow of death, yet we feared no evil. Tirzah's favorite verse was, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from which cometh my help." We knew what Cynthia would say, and she did. "Lift me to the rock that is higher than I."

Elmas and Bedros recited something in Turkish because the Bible had been translated into the Turkish language not only because so many Armenians spoke Turkish but also because the Bible had been translated into so many different languages.

Then Papa began a prayer. So often I used to fall asleep when he prayed too long but tonight somehow I wanted to listen to every word he uttered. I forgot about the cold and about fatigue.

Somehow I didn't remember being hungry even though I didn't remember having eaten. Mother had stuffed our pockets with biscuits and zwieback and we could pick on it whenever we felt hungry. When there was no water we could eat snow. Tonight we all huddled under the blankets that Mozart had carried for us. Tonight

we didn't have to wonder where Cynthia was. Tonight our cup truly did runneth over. Tomorrow there still would be God. And so on the second night of our flight we were still together and, yes almost happy.

It is possible that during the night ten thousand people were dreaming the same dream, hoping for the same goal, praying the same prayers, wanting to be home. The poor French soldiers were dreaming of their homes so far away. We were leaving one home and praying for another. We could make a home anywhere if our loved ones were with us. Tonight the Bagdikian family was happy in spite of their bed of snow. They were all together. The joy of this realization was defeated only by our sorrow for those around who could not find their loved ones at the end of a long journey but not a journey that had ended yet.

All night long people passed by or stopped, looking for lost ones, calling lost ones. Papa could not remain immobile for very long. When he got up and said he was going to look around to see who had arrived, what the plans were for tomorrow, we begged him not to go.

"Oh, I'm not leaving to go far," he said. "I want to know if all the soldiers are stopping, if some of the people I know are here also."

He said something to Mother that we did not understand. It made me anxious but I was so tired and sleepy, that even restless, anxious sleep was welcome. I had been dreaming all day long of only stopping and sleeping. That is all I was praying for — not the luxury of a house, not my bedstead. I had even forgotten to be afraid. The people around us all were friends or a friendly, kind army. All I wanted was to stop walking and to sleep. Now I had stopped walking and I was lying down. I was so sleepy that the rhythm of the passing people became a lullaby.



CHAPTER 12

Burning the Bridge

Morning came too soon. I was awakened by Cynthia's crying.

"I don't want to go in the cart. I can walk, I don't want to go."

At daybreak Mrs. Lyman had found us to ask if Cynthia was ready to go with them. Papa was busying persuading her to go. Mother was making excuses for her.

"With this attitude I am afraid she will be very troublesome to you," she was saying to Mrs. Lyman.

When Papa sensed that Mother really did not want Cynthia to leave us, he too, added, "I think we can manage having her ride for a while and walk for a while. Thank you for the two days' ride. Even if she has to walk all the rest of the way, it has cut down her walking by two days."

After bidding Mrs. Lyman farewell and Godspeed, and praying for their safe journey, Mother said something in Armenian to Papa. I found out later from Elmas that she had said it might be better for everybody to walk as the inactivity of riding would be dangerous for one's circulation, especially if the weather continued to get colder and colder.

We started our third day with the family intact. It was not easy to keep together. The very few who were still riding by necessity had to be separated from those walking. The scouts who always went ahead more or less paved the way for those following.

Whenever the line slowed down, anxious whispers went the rounds. "Have they met the enemy? Are the scouts returning with news of caution or direction to turn back or take another road?"

Often the cause of a tie-up was someone's falling and blocking a

narrow passageway in the mountain. Today it seemed this was happening quite often. At one point, a few people had stopped completely to rest or eat. Someone said an old lady is dead and her family has stopped to bury her. The first such encounter frightened me. I had forgotten to be frightened once we left the burning city of Marash. Somehow out in the open, wedged between an army and friendly pilgrims, it was not so frightening as being confined in the basement of a house for days, listening to the bullets whiz by, wondering if the next one will hit one of us or someone we know, or anyone, whether we knew them or not.

I tried not to listen to the conversation around me. Yet, I wanted to hear everything. It was frightening to hear someone say, "The snow is too deep to dig a grave." Or to hear someone reply, "The dead do not need protection." To my childish mind the care of the dead seemed very important. How could the dead be neglected? People always dropped all their tasks to care for the dead and pay homage for the departed. How could they leave them now? I did not stop to watch to see what would happen. When I saw dear ones weeping, I began to weep. I was so glad no one could see me weeping, too.

It was getting colder and colder and I tried to cover my face with my woolen scarf. Whenever I had worn it before I had always thought of it as an ornament. Uncle James had brought us each a scarf when he came from Europe. Each one was a different color. He had left it with Mother to decide which one would have a particular color. Tirzah's was red. We had guessed right away why she thought Tirzah should have the red one—to go with her nickname of "Cherrylips." Cynthia's was yellow, for "Goldilocks," we guessed. But why Nora's was bright green we could not guess. It had no connection with her nickname. We had teased Mother to explain why.

"It goes with her name," Mother had explained. We knew Nora had been named after the heroine in a story mother had enjoyed reading but needed further explanation.

"The story took place in Ireland," Mother had begun.

"Where is Ireland?" we had chorused.

It was time for a geography lesson. Mother had brought out a globe, pointed out the British Isles and the part called Ireland. Ireland, the Emerald Isle, the green isle. Now we could understand better. I had never heard of Ireland or the Irish before.

But why blue for Lydia? Mother had noticed my preference for blue- blue ribbons-whenver I had a choice to select, blue material whenever a merchant had come to the house with bolts of cloth from which customers selected. Ladies did not go to the market place for their purchases. Only the poor enjoyed such a luxury.

Just thinking about my blue scarf had passed the time. However, I was a little startled when I realized that during my retrospection I had become separated from everyone-everyone, that is, in my family. There were always people before me, behind me, and on both sides of me except when we had to pass single file on occasions through narrow gorges in the mountain. Then I thought of my scarf again.

I thought of all the other clothing we had worn, were still wearing. I realized we had not changed our clothing since we left home. I wondered how soon we would have a chance to change. I was not carrying any other clothing. Ben Hur was the only bundle we had, plus a few blankets we had on Mozart. Maybe there were bundles I did not know about. Mothers and fathers always thought of everything. I was so glad I was not a father or a mother just then. I wondered how they could think of everything. I would not have thought of wearing all the necklaces and bracelets I had on. I could not feel them on but I hoped they were still there. We were going to sell them if we needed to, in case our friends could not save our gold for us.

I thought I was hungry but I was not sure. I knew my pockets were bulging with zwieback. I wondered why Mother had thought of zwieback. There were other things I liked better but maybe it was not handy when we practically ran away. I thought of taking one out from my pocket to eat but it was too cold to take my hands out of the cuffs of my coat where my arms seemed to be interlocked. I decided I was not hungry but I remembered that I was cold and I was getting sleepy again. I wanted to stop and rest,

but I was afraid I would block someone's way. People did not seem to want anyone to stop.

I heard someone shout, "Bridge!" I did not know whether this had any particular significance except that it was the first time we had come to a bridge and there was a wide open space ahead. The land seemed to be level. I did not realize that suddenly we seemed to have left the mountains behind. Maybe, I thought, we left it behind while I was thinking. Sometimes I could stop thinking, but sometimes it helped pass the time.

I saw some soldiers coming toward us. I wondered why they were walking back. Then I saw Papa among them. I cried and ran toward him. He had taken Mother and Cynthia across the bridge and turned back to find us. To his relief, he had seen Bedros with Nora crossing the bridge while he was returning. Before he found me he had found Elmas and Ben Hur with Tirzah. They had stopped to see if I had been left behind.

He had told them to go ahead and cross the bridge as fast as possible, that he would find me. He had walked back a long distance before he found me. He had asked people if they had seen a small girl with a blue scarf. Some had said yes, others no. The only description he could give of me was the blue scarf. Mother had reminded him what to look for whenever he retraced our steps to find those of us lagging behind. Red, yellow, green, blue became important factors. On the first day we all looked white but now we had been able to shake off the snow and now it was not snowing.

"Papa, Papa," I cried when I saw him. A refulgent smile crossed his face. The joy in his face made me cry.

"Thank God," he said, and took me in his arms.

"Maybe I should carry you," he said. I remembered that I had just had my eleventh birthday—and the party that we did not have. I felt too old to be carried.

"I'm not tired," I said, feeling very brave. I was so glad now that Papa always walked so fast. Sometimes it would upset me because I could not keep up with him but now he could walk so fast he was travelling twice the distance of the others, always walking back to find the missing members of his family.

As we walked towards the bridge, Papa was telling others to cross the bridge as fast as possible. Many of the people seemed to know who he was. They called him by name. Some talked to him in Turkish, others in Armenian. When they talked in Turkish I could understand much of it but what they said began to frighten me. It would have frightened me much more if I had not been holding my father's hand, knowing that across the bridge we would all be together again.

When Papa told the people the army might have to burn the bridge because of news some of the scouts had brought, people either ran forward or stopped to find their dear ones. It was so easy to become separated. Just now there was an open space and the long line of people was gradually converging. People were calling dear ones by name. Someone suggested that everyone be quiet lest the enemy hiding in distant hills hear them.

"Will they hear us?" I asked Papa.

He seemed to know what I meant by "they."

"It won't make much difference," he said. "If they are near enough to hear, they are near enough to see that it is still daylight. There are too many soldiers. They won't do anything during daylight and by nighttime the bridge will be burned."

I always wondered how he knew so much about everything.

As we crossed the bridge, I said "I can't see Mother and the rest. Where are they?"

"They are quite a distance from the bridge where we found shelter," Papa said. "The road curves so the shelters can't be seen until we make a left turn."

Crossing the bridge is one of the most vivid memories I have of our flight. I could see the people behind us, the people in front of us, the water below. The water seemed wide and flowing very slowly. It did not seem very deep. Maybe it was covered with ice and snow. Some of the soldiers had cautiously tried to walk across the river but said it was too dangerous. "That's very good," Papa said. "That means it won't be safe for the enemy to cross when the bridge is not there."

It didn't take long to cross the bridge but I kept looking back to

see if more people were coming. I hoped all the other children were with their parents, too. Some of the soldiers had not crossed but were waiting on the other side. Some of them who had crossed had stopped, too.

"They are going to stay on both sides till all the people cross," Papa answered a question I had not yet asked. I wondered how the soldiers always knew what to do. I had not noticed anyone telling them what to do. I could not resist the question, "Who tells them what to do?"

"There are teachers in the army as well as in a school," Papa said. "In the army they are called 'officers.'"

I wanted to ask many more questions but I was getting out of breath. Papa was again walking so fast I had to run to keep up with him. I remember we turned left at the bridge and after walking what must have been a few hundred yards I could see a very low buildings. They probably should not be called buildings. They were more like long stables but they were too clean for animals to have been living inside. There did not seem to be any signs of ownership either. Maybe it was just structures built near the bridge for those who used it while the bridge was being built. I did not give it any thought at the time except for the fact that Mother and the rest of the family were inside and I knew we would sleep indoors tonight.

It was dusk just as we got to this shelter. Mother had spread the blankets on the ground just as she always did when we found a picnic spot. There was something to eat but I don't remember what it was. I was again ready to rest and sleep. Papa kept going in and out, bringing news to each group about who was outside now and if everyone had crossed the bridge.

"Please keep coming back so we will know everything is all right outside," Mother said.

We begged Papa not to go out but he said he might have a chance to be helpful. They were waiting for a few of the Americans who had not yet arrived. The cart in which Cynthia had ridden for two days had not been seen all day and everyone was anxious for the occupants who were all American teachers or missionaries.

I think we were all thinking the same thing at the same time.

What if Cynthia had remained with them? We would not have been together now. We were happy she was not with them but we were anxious to hear news of the missing ones. The anxiety that permeated the air was not conducive to sleep. I had not noticed how many children and babies there had been during this flight until we found shelter under a roof. The men said they would all sleep outside if their sick women or children could remain inside. Some of the babies were crying but somehow Ben Hur hardly ever cried. Mother had to keep unbundling him to make sure he was alive. It was always a relief to find him breathing.

News of those who had died on the road was spreading. Tonight anxious minds and hearts must have been lulled to sleep only because of extremely tired bodies.

"When will they start to burn the bridge?" everyone seemed to be asking. We had been fortunate thus far not to encounter the enemy but everyone seemed to expect something to happen tonight. We felt safe with a regiment of soldiers.

Papa and other men came in from time to time to furnish news to those inside and encourage them if possible. Everyone was waiting for the appearance of the cart with the Americans. As the hours passed there were fewer and fewer people crossing the bridge. Sometimes it was said there had been long intervals when no one crossed, but friends knew who were missing and everyone was anxious about the Americans. The bridge was guarded all night and not burned until we were ready to start our march again the next day.

News had been brought by some of the last ones to arrive at the bridge during the early hours of the next morning that they had been delayed because of their attempts to save the Americans. They had found the cart at a standstill with all the occupants frozen to death. They had buried them as best they could.

The bearers of this sad news were reliable men. There was no question of this tragedy. The tragedy seemed almost to touch our family. How near we had come to be part of it.

"I just had a premonition," Mother sobbed, "that we should remain together in order to survive. Those poor, poor Americans.

Not even they were destined to go home. No going home for them now." It was our lot that day to feel the first great tragedy of this flight.



CHAPTER 13

Walking or Dying

The fourth day began with heavy hearts and new fears. We had found in the elements another enemy. We started out together and remained together a little longer than usual. The fact that there had been a few skirmishes with same chetahs the night before did not concern people so much as what we had begun to see today—more people stopping to bury their dead. Once in a while we would see a body no one claimed maybe because no one in his family knew he had stopped his flight. I don't remember being shocked at anything that day. I remember I felt my feet aching. I tried to imagine a snow pile was a rock on which I could sit but Tirzah was right with me and she would not let me stop. I began to cry.

"Once you stop it will be harder to start again," she pleaded with me. She kept close by my side. Mother and Cynthia were walking today. Papa was leading Mozart with only blankets for a load.

"Why is Mother walking?" I asked Tirzah.

"Everyone has to walk today. People who don't walk will freeze to death."

I felt ill and tired and sleepy.

"These people were walking but they died just the same," I cried, looking at the dead bodies around which we had to walk. Such a sight was getting to be more common as the day wore on.

A woman's hysterical cries aroused me from my apathy.

"My boy, my boy," she was crying upon discovering the body of her child. She had lost him in today's blizzard. Some said it was snowing again, others said it was just the wind.

"God," another woman cried, seeing the face of the

distraught mother.

I wanted to say, "I hate God," but I was afraid. I thought He would hear me and maybe freeze someone in our family. Sometimes, in fact most of the time, I could not understand God. I was even more confused when I heard the conversation of two women who were walking very near to me.

"This death," one was saying to the other, "is much easier than dying of thirst as I almost did on the road to Der-El-Zor. The heat is much worse than cold."

I had not been warm for so long that it was hard for me to agree with her, although I was not included in the conversation. No one even noticed that I was listening or understanding. I was just trudging along, still trying to understand God's ways. I wondered if He could see how miserable we all were and why He was not doing something about it. I decided as soon as I had a chance I would ask Mother about it. I knew she would have the right answer but I could not imagine what the answer would be.

The ladies were still talking.

"At least snow purifies the air. There are more sicknesses during extreme heat when unsanitary conditions exist," seemed to be the gist of their conversation.

"We prayed for just a breeze," she continued. "And do you know how it feels to be thirsty? And no one whips us here when we stop. No wild Turks here to attack young girls. I remember the day the wild Turkish guides stripped us and made us march naked in the hot sun ..."

Tirzah had been listening too. Now she pushed me forward.

"Let us run and we'll almost be with Mother," she said. But I was still thinking about what the ladies had said and again I wondered why God had not struck those guards dead.

"That God!" I said.

"What did you say?" Tirzah asked.

"I don't care what God thinks," I said. "I don't care if He makes me freeze. I am sleepy and I am going to lie down and sleep for a few minutes."

Tirzah took hold of me and pushed me forward. We came up to

Elmas with Ben Hur. She looked dejected, too, but, as usual, did not say anything.

When we caught up with Mother I was ready to break down and cry, but before I had a chance to give vent to my feelings, I saw her face. She looked ill. Papa looked worried too.

"Are you all right?" he asked us and then tried to persuade Mother to ride on Mozart again.

"Just for a while," he said. "You've got to keep moving."

Cynthia had not done much walking so far but Papa said she must walk for the rest of the day for her own good.

Mozart seemed happy to have Mother back on him, I thought. He could always tell when someone else rode him.

"Remarkable that he has not lost a shoe," Papa said. Papa could always find something to say. Whenever we had guests Papa did most of the talking. He never was without a story or a subject. I had never thought of Mozart's shoes. I looked down at my own shoes. They had burst open!

"My shoes," I cried, but no one heard me so I kept trudging on.

"I think we are going to stop soon," Papa said. "The line ahead is slowing down."

This was good news to me. It had been a long day, even longer than all the other days. I felt sick. That's the last I remembered of that day.

When I woke up, it was dark. People were either sleeping, sitting up or stretched out on the white ground. Now and then one could hear someone sobbing or a baby crying. Always there would be someone crying. I did not know where we were or what time it was but I tried to see if we were all there. We were always losing Nora and Bedros but tonight they had caught up with us.

It was getting light enough so I could make out the familiar faces. Sometimes I dreaded daylight because it meant more walking and I was getting so tired and each day seemed colder than the day before.

I never remembered being hungry but I remembered being very sleepy. I liked being sleepy because then I did not feel the cold so much. I dreamed of my warm bed and wondered if some day I

would be in a warm bed again. I wondered if it would be possible to forget this cold and this nightmare. I wanted to think and think so the time would pass. Somehow the time would pass and we would start a new day.

We always prayed before we started. Almost every family had someone with a Bible. I hoped God would see all these people with their Bibles and think they were good so He would do something to make them happy and reward them for trusting in Him. Papa had brought a small pocket Bible. But Mother's favorite Bible, with our dates of birth, names, important events in the life of our family, was buried with the gold left behind.

In later years when we wondered who had taken our gold, I often wondered how people would feel stealing something when they knew to whom it belonged. The Bible would be with it. A few neighbors had known about it when Papa buried it all.

Before we started, Mother reminded us of the zwieback in our pockets and asked how much we had left. Just then some kind man brought us milk. Mother seemed surprised. A few men had rounded out a few stray cows during the night. "That's a good sign," someone said.

Before I had a chance to feel hopeful, someone added, "It could be a bad sign. Where did the cows come from? Are we near a Turkish village? Or maybe Armenians from a nearby village are being driven out."

I felt at ease, however, when Papa said by tomorrow we would reach Islahia where we could probably take a train. The army would get there first and take over the railway station. It was not being run by Turks. The army of occupation still controlled that section.

I always tried to believe what I wanted to believe. I never remembered thinking so much before. My head was full of thoughts that I never had before. Just walking had become such a habit that I would walk for miles and then suddenly stop to see where I was, who I was.

I realized suddenly that I was being pushed around. We had come to a narrow passage. I could see the sky when I looked up but on both sides the snow was so high it seemed I was going through a

white tunnel. I could not see anyone familiar. Instinctively I tried to run but could not. I was stepping on people lying on the ground. I was horrified.

"Excuse me," I said.

"Little girl, don't waste your breath saying 'Excuse me,'" a woman in back said. "They can't hear you. They are dead!"

Ordinarily, I would have been frightened. But I seemed to be in a stupor. I didn't say "Excuse me" anymore. I tried to walk around or over the bodies. When the tunnel began to get wider and the snow had blown away from the bodies on the ground, I could see that the bodies were those of the Algerian soldiers. Some were blacker than others, I thought. People had taken their coats.

"They'll be cold," I said, thinking out loud.

"They're the only ones who are not cold now," I heard that same woman say.

I wondered why she was following me. I wanted to get away from her. Then

I realized she had answered my thoughts in Turkish. She must understand English, I thought. I was so sure I had really thought this in silence when she answered, "You must be one of the Bagdikians."

I nodded in silence and tried to forge my way ahead. It was too cold to open my mouth.

Now I saw before me a whole row of dead men-naked! Every bit of clothing had been taken away from them.

"To keep the live ones warm," the voice in back said.

"I didn't say a word," I thought, "and she could not see my face."

Then I stumbled and fell on one of the dead bodies. I didn't dare cry or appear frightened. I didn't want the lady following me to say anything else.

I wondered if God saw all these dead people and if He saw me fall on one. While I was thinking, I almost tripped again but the woman in back caught me.

"You won't hurt them by walking on them," she said. "They're dead. They're lucky."

Now I really wanted to run away.

"Tirzah!" I called.

I heard her answer. I had not realized she was just ahead of me. I could walk a little faster now. The dead bodies were farther apart. I caught up with Tirzah and Elmas who was cuddling Ben Hur. I stopped.

"I want to lie down for a few minutes," I said.

"You mustn't!" Tirzah said.

"But I'm so sleepy."

"You mustn't!" Tirzah scolded me.

"I'm too sleepy to walk." I was crying. "Let me sleep just for a few minutes."

"No!" Tirzah said more insistently.

I bargained with her.

"Let me lie down just for a few seconds," I pleaded. "Up to twenty. Count up to twenty. I'll get up then," I promised.

"No!" she shouted.

"The poor girl, let her lie down for a few minutes," Elmas said.

Tirzah whispered something in her ear. Then both of them tried to drag me. I bargained again.

"Count to only ten," I pleaded. "If you'll just let me close my eyes for a few minutes, I promise I won't stop again."

Now they both shouted, "No! You must not stop!"

I began to cry.

"Count to five," I said. I was so sleepy. If all the wealth in the world had been offered to me, I would not have exchanged it for a few seconds of sleep. "I'm too sleepy to go any farther," I said, and fell to the ground. Tirzah pulled me up, slapped my face and shook me.

"I have to. I have to." Now Tirzah began to cry.

"You're a Turk, that's what you are!" I yelled. "How can you be so cruel at a time like this? You're a Turk, that's what you are." I was crying, too.

"I have to! I have to!" Tirzah was sobbing.

I heard the woman near me say "Once they go to sleep, that's the end. If you go to sleep now, you'll be like the soldiers on the ground."

"Well, don't let anyone take my clothes!" I said.

"If you go to sleep, they will," she said.

"Well, I won't let them," I said, and started to walk again, angry.

It must have been a relief to Tirzah and Elmas to arouse enough anger in me to make me walk again. I didn't realize it at the time that Tirzah had saved my life.

As soon as Tirzah felt it safe to let me alone for a while, she started to run ahead calling for Papa. Soon we saw him walking towards us. Tirzah ran ahead to meet him.

"She is telling him about me," I thought.

"If you weren't such a big girl, I would carry you," Papa said. "But don't forget you were eleven last month. And you must walk for your own safety. Tomorrow the walking will be over and we'll be in a warm place again." "I am dreaming," I thought and followed him. We stopped just for a second to look inside Ben Hur's bundle. Papa dug into some clean snow and put it in his mouth.

"Ice cream for the baby," he said. Yes, he was still breathing. He was nine days old when we left. This was our sixth day. He must have been two weeks old.

[A short time before his death in 1957, my father told me that he had, in fact, believed that I had frozen to death, but kept it a secret for fear that it would demoralize the rest of the family. When my mother began to faint and fall off her horse, my father dropped his supposedly frozen bundle and when "the bundle" hit the ground, I cried. BHB]

We were now in an open plain. People seemed to be scattered. There were a few here and a few there, not in bunches as there had been earlier in the day. Now we were seeing bodies of little children on the ground. People would stop to see if they were their children. Once in a while we could see someone take a scarf or coat from a dead person.

"How can they?" I thought.

I wouldn't wear something belonging to a dead person.

At first, I wanted to go by the dead bodies as fast as I could. But soon I found myself throwing sidelong glances—just to make sure it was not one of the family. What a horrid thought! Then I would start to run. Soon we caught up with Mother and Cynthia. We were all

together now except Nora and Bedros. "Why can't he keep up with us?" Mother sighed.

"After all, she is a heavy bundle to carry," Papa said.

"I should realize that," Mother said. "She is six years old. Almost seven-in June."

June seemed so far away. It was the middle of February now.

"I wonder where we will be in June," I thought. "Even if we don't have a bed by then, at least it will be warm."

Up to now I had not given much thought to the seasons. It seemed I had lived a lifetime in one week. I could remember days of fear during the war when we wondered if we would be the next to be exiled. I remembered the fear in Mother's eyes when she knew we were in court the day the gendarme had driven us from our summer home to the city. I remembered so well her terrified face when Papa was brought home, unconscious, in a stretcher. Yes, we had known fear, but never deprivation. Now we knew fear, discomfort, pain. Now I ached all over. My toes were sticking out of my shoes. The shoes had burst open.

It was soon dusk. Far ahead on the horizon we could see a few objects that looked like sheds or stables. As we approached it and dusk turned into darkness, we saw a light ahead.

People were saying, "Could that be the station? Islahia?"

Someone was coming towards us. He stopped to talk with Papa. We gathered around him. Papa was talking to him in Turkish. Soon the people behind us caught up with us. Some were talking in Turkish, some in Armenian. Whenever Turkish was spoken, I could understand.

"You can reach Islahia in a few more hours," the man was saying, "but it will be safer to stop here tonight and rest. Too many have died today. There will be some sort of shelter. We seem to be in a deserted village. We have caught a few stray cows. The men are killing the cows now so we can all have meat. If they can milk them before they kill them, there might be milk for the babies. There is a little wood in some of the huts. You're within reach of help and safety. I advise you to be patient and stay here at night."

"If this is a deserted village, the enemy must be near," someone

said. I'm not going to take a chance and stop. I'm going ahead."

Some agreed with him and went ahead.

"What do you think?" Papa asked Mother.

"Let's stay," Mother said.

Papa seemed relieved. "Tirzah and Lydia are too tired. I think it best for us all to stay."

We stayed in a large, empty room, with no floors.

"Is this a stable?" I asked Mother

"It's too clean for a stable," Mother said. "People must have lived here."

"But there is no furniture," I said.

"Probably they took everything with them," Mother replied.

Soon the men had found firewood and built a fire. It was heavenly to be warm again. Then there was sizzling meat. How good it smelled! People were devouring it.

"My kingdom for some salt," someone said.

People were actually laughing!

"Would anyone think of bringing salt from Marash?" someone said, jokingly. There was more laughter.

"Thank God for food even without salt," Papa laughed.

I noticed he was going in and out of the hut. Each time he returned, Mother would give him an anxious look. We knew what it was. Again, we were all here except Nora.

"I hope he'll at least stop here to look for us," Mother said.

Papa wanted to reassure her.

"If he does not," he said, "maybe he'll have reached Islahia by the time we get there tomorrow."

"But he is always behind us," Mother reminded him.

"I know," Papa said, "but when he finds out he is so near the end of the journey, he might hurry."

There were others looking for dear ones. People were stopping at the different huts, asking if so-and-so was there. Papa went to look in all the huts but came back without news. Now he was utterly dejected.

"God has been with us all through this journey," Mother said.

"Let's not doubt Him now." Each was trying to reassure the other.

We children sat in silence, our parents' faces and words the barometers for us to watch.

Ben Hur was sleeping peacefully. Papa had read somewhere that the name Ben Hur meant "Child Of Fire." Here was the "Child of Fire," two weeks old, fed on melting snow. He had escaped from a burning city through snow and ice. What fate was in store for him?

With anxious hearts, we fell asleep, using one another's laps for pillows. Too soon we were reminded that it was still cold because the wood fire soon turned to ashes.

During my drowsy moments I imagined this hut to be the manger in which Jesus was born. I had seen pictures of it in Sunday School. That manger was much smaller than this, though. Thinking of Jesus made me think that surely He would watch over Nora. I needed Him so desperately tonight that I promised I would not doubt His goodness again. We were almost at the end of our journey. Surely, He would not spoil all this by having something awful happen to Nora! Not even to punish me for the unkind thoughts I had about Him sometimes.

"In that case He should punish me," I thought. But secretly I thought that's not always how He works! Then I caught myself doubting Him again.

"I mustn't!" I thought. "I mustn't."

I really wanted Him to know I wanted to trust Him. Every waking moment I was praying for Nora's safety. Papa had prayed that night, as he had every night. Almost everyone prayed every night. Often on the road the old ladies would pray all day long.

"Why did He hear some of the prayers and not others?" I thought. Then I was frightened because I was afraid it might seem like doubting Him again. I really wanted to trust Him. I found myself bargaining with Him—"If you'll protect Nora and let us all reach safety, I'll never mistrust You again," I had prayed.

"Everybody is praying. Can He hear everyone?" I thought. The more I thought, the more puzzled I became.

Often I had thought how difficult it must be to be parents. They had to think of everything. Tonight, especially, it seemed good to be a child.

I could not help thinking of Nora but I trusted Mother and Papa to find her. I felt I could go to sleep. There was Mother and Papa to find Nora.

"Is it all right to go to sleep?" I asked Mother.

"Of course, darling," she said, her eyes following my feet. It was beginning to hurt again but I did not want to complain. Mother had Nora to think about. She always seemed to know what we were thinking about.

"We can all go to sleep," she said. "Our Heavenly Father has taken care of us so far. He will not forsake us now."

Just then the thought came to me that, Mother and Papa, too, had someone to worry for them. God looked after them the way they looked after us. As I began to get drowsier and drowsier, I thought maybe that's what was meant by "children of God."

I dreamed all night but I could not remember clearly any of the dreams. When I woke up Papa was not with us. We had fallen into the habit of counting everyone before going to sleep and as soon as awakening.

"Where is Papa?" we all seemed to ask simultaneously.

"He went to see if he could find Nora and Bedros," Mother said.

As she prepared us for the final lap of our walking, Papa walked in. We knew he had not found Nora.

"They must have continued to Islahia," he said, trying to be reassuring. "We will wait for them there if they are not already there."



CHAPTER 14

Islahia

It was morning again. I had been awakened because my pillow was moving. I don't know on whose lap I had been resting my head. People were getting ready to go. It was easy to start out again. We had not undressed for six nights so there was no dressing to do.

I realized again with a start that Nora was not with us. I reminded God of my promise.

We said our morning prayers and started out again, always looking ahead to see if Nora and Bedros were ahead of us. Sometimes we looked behind. If she had not reached the village during the night, she must either be ahead or there was little hope of seeing her. We all seemed to sense this without putting it into words.

Mother could hardly talk. She had a very bad cold. I did not feel cold anymore. I felt feverish. Mother noticed when I took off my scarf.

"Don't," she said, "even if you feel hot. You still need its protection. We'll soon be there."

She looked at my feet. My toes were peeping through the burst shoes. The toes were swollen. The thoughts of Nora had made me forget my feet.

With heavy hearts we started out again. Before very long we were horrified to find so many dead bodies on the ground. The nearer we approached Islahia, where Papa said we would reach a railroad station, the more dead people we saw. Anxious ones were stopping to see the dead faces. Could one of them be a loved one? When I saw Papa looking too, I was frightened.

Maybe he is looking for Nora, I thought, horrified. I could see Mother and Cynthia ahead on Mozart. Papa would lead them for a while and walk back to see if Tirzah and I and Ben Hur and Elmas were all right. Of course, he was also always looking for Nora and Bedros whether he was going forward or coming back to check on us.

"Going, coming back, and going again," Tirzah said, "makes him walk twice more than the rest of us!"

I had not thought of this. Tirzah could do arithmetic much better than I. This observation of hers occupied me a few minutes. I was always glad to think about something so the time would pass. Going over dead bodies seemed so natural by now. Most of them were still Algerian soldiers. At first the nude bodies had shocked me but now I had seen so many that I would never be shocked again.

In six days I had grown six years. I had learned to think. What else was there to do? I either had to think to pass the time or I wanted to lie down and go to sleep. But Tirzah had never let me alone. If I slowed down, she would slow down. If I ran ahead, she could watch me.

The morning of the sixth day was a clear day. It had stopped snowing. In some spots the drift had raised the snow so high that one could not see ahead. I soon realized that I was out in an open space now and could see several men on horseback coming towards us. I thought I was imagining things but the men and the horses were real. They were throwing bread right and left to the hungry, cold men and women. I didn't feel hungry so I did not pick up anything. But I tried to walk faster to keep up with Mozart.

Papa, Mother and Cynthia had stopped for a few minutes so we could catch up with them. Papa had picked up bread—I think it was zwieback again – and gave us all a piece. I knew, however, that he and Mother were looking back for hopes of seeing Nora but there was no one within eye's distance who looked like Nora or Bedros.

"Let us go on," Papa said to Mother. "Maybe they are already there. Look! There is the railroad station! We are almost in Islahia!"

By this time, we were all together except Nora and Bedros. With heavy hearts we started on the last lap of our journey. Yes, we had

reached the railroad station. Several of the officers we knew from Marash were there rounding up the soldiers who had survived. In this struggle for survival over the elements, age had made no difference. Young and old alike succumbed, maybe the old because of frailty and maybe the young because of lack of the will to live. Who knows?

An officer beckoned to Papa. He took him aside to talk with him. He came back with the news.

"The only train today will leave in a few minutes. It will take only the French soldiers," he had told Papa. However, he had added, "You have been of great help to us in keeping up the morale of your people and I think I can arrange to have your family go on this train to Adana. No other civilians will be allowed."

We should have been overjoyed but each felt the heart and thoughts of the others. We could not go without Nora.

The soldiers were filling up the train. Not even all of them could get on this train. One of the officers came to help Mother and us on the train. "You are ill, Madame," he said in French and we want to help you. He had been to our house many times to dinner. He had not forgotten us now.

"Thank you, but I cannot go without Nora," Mother said without hesitation. The officer knew Nora well. No one who came to the house could forget her.

"But she can come on the next train," he said, half-heartedly.

By this time many people had gathered around us. Some were kind, many were unkind.

"You are lucky to be so privileged," one bitter woman said to Mother. "What I would give to get on that train."

"I wish they would take you in my place," Mother said. "But I cannot leave unless all my children are with me."

"You should be thankful that you have lost only one," I heard someone else say. "God has been kinder to you than to me. I lost my two children. I saw them freeze. I could not make a grave for them."

Mother began to weep.

"God comfort you," she said, "but I did not see my child die. She may be living and I cannot leave here without knowing what happened to her.

"You had a servant look after her," someone else said bitterly.

The train whistle blew. The officer came again.

"Madame, you must decide," he said with authority, though trying to be kind. "The train will leave in a few minutes."

"Bedros!" Papa shouted just then.

We turned around, our hearts sinking. Yes, it was Bedros but Nora was not with him.

"Where is she? Where is she?" we all shouted.

"I don't know," he said. "When we left this morning she said she wanted to walk."

"But why did you not at least hold her hand?" Papa said. "How could you be so unreliable? You gave me your word of honor that you would not desert her and I gave you my word of honor that I would reward you generously."

At this, Bedros's face sank. The reward? He needed it now. He would be in a strange city. He had never left Marash before.

The officer came again.

"Madame," he said, "my superior officer has been most kind and patient and is willing to wait, but he, too, has orders."

"I cannot leave," Mother said.

We children said nothing. Mother was always right.

The officer turned to Papa.

"You have other children and your sick wife to think about," he said, trying to persuade Papa.

I could not understand everything, but a word here and a word there and with what others surrounding us were repeating, we knew what was going on.

"I don't blame her," one mother said.

"She should think of the other children," another said. "Look at that one with her frozen toes sticking out," she said, pointing to me. "She will be in the hospital many months."

"I won't go unless my mother does!" I cried.

It was a tense moment. Only the neighing of Mozart aroused us. Then Mother almost fainted.

"Nora's green scarf!" she cried.

Mother called to a woman who was passing us, one of the stragglers still coming toward the station.

"My daughter's scarf!" Mother cried.

"It's mine," the woman said.

"Let me look at it," Mother pleaded. "I don't think there was another like it in Marash."

Mother looked closely.

"It is my daughter's," Mother cried. "I won't take it from you. Just tell me the truth. Where did you find it?"

"It was on the ground and I was cold," the woman admitted.

"Surely you cannot blame me."

Now the woman was crying.

"You may have it," Mother said, "but please tell me, just where did you find it? Was it today, near here? Or where?"

The train blew its whistle and jolted. Now a larger crowd had gathered around us.

"Oh, dear God," Mother was praying, "help me do the right thing. I have my other children, my baby, my husband with me, but how can I leave, not knowing where Nora is, if she is living or dead?"

"Take that train, take that train," a hysterical woman was shouting. "What I would give to have at least one of my children and my husband here and the chance to ride on that train!"

"Take some of the sick people in our place," Mother pleaded with the officer.

"The permission is for your family only," he said. "I am sorry."

It seemed like eternity since we had arrived in Islahia. I found later it had not been more than an hour. But that hour stands more vividly in my mind than the six days and six nights. On those days and nights there was no decision to be made. We just stopped when the soldiers stopped. We started when the soldiers started. We had a destination. Now, in this darkest of all the hours, we had no destination. How terrible it was not to have a destination! How terrible it was not to know where a dear one was!

In the past at times like this I used to think, "What about tomorrow? By tomorrow, we will know what happened today." But sometimes we dreaded what could happen tomorrow. But I did not have to make the decision. I was a child. I had a father and a mother to make the decision.

God was good to children who had a father and a mother. Just then I thought of the children who had come through without their fathers and their mothers. I was horrified. I wanted to make sure Mother and Papa were there. Yes, there they were. But they did not know when to begin to mourn, when to give up hope.

The train whistle blew again. It seemed louder this time. And the black smoke from the locomotive seemed to reach the skies. The locomotive was going in small motions back and forth, as if practicing for a race.

"I hope something is wrong with it," I thought, "so they can't go until Nora comes, if Nora comes..."

Mozart's neighing aroused us all.

"Nora!" Mother shouted. "My Nora! That's her. No one else walks like that."

"The poor woman is losing her mind," someone said. "She has begun to imagine things."

But everyone was following Mother's eyes. Yes! It was Nora, trudging through the snow leisurely- a lone figure. She must have been several hundred yards away. She was just like a speck in the bright sun against the white snow, but you could tell it was Nora.

[From other family members, the arrival of Nora was even more dramatic because she was almost naked. BHB]

When we shouted, she began to cry and run. Papa ran towards her. He picked her up in his arms. It was a miraculous reunion. When she reached us with Papa, we all began to cry with joy.

"God must have singled you out," cried the bitter woman who had lost her dear ones, with envy, I am sure, but no jealousy in her heart. I am sure she must have known that sadness and tragedy befalling others could not bring her dear ones back.

The puffing of the locomotive and another whistle from the train made us realize that it had not left yet. Mother and Papa were trying to gather us together. Our friend, the French officer, had heard the excitement and was there to help us children on the train. A neigh from Mozart made us realize that he was with us, too.

Just then Bedros appeared, appealing to Papa for help. In his joy, Papa could do nothing but forgive him.

"You may have Mozart and also the money I promised you," he said. I am sure that he almost emptied his pocket where he kept the gold.

Elmas was asked to go with us, even to America if she wished. She stayed with us when we boarded the train.

Following the pattern of other years, Papa almost missed the train again. He had remembered the bitter woman who had lost all of her family and had gone back to offer her some of the few remaining pieces of gold he had.

The train stopped its noises and short jolts. If it had needed fixing, by now it had been fixed. I think God must have had a hand in tinkering with the engine! Our joy in settling down in the train was dampened by the sad faces we left behind.

Soon after the train left the station, we were out of sight of the thousands of homeless refugees who were now displaced persons. The French soldiers began to sing. Where all the flasks of wine came from was a puzzle to me. I had not noticed them before. The soldiers were dancing and singing in the aisle of the train. One soldier came and offered us a drink from his flask. We shied away in horror but Mother thanked him and drank a drop and passed it to us, saying, "It will keep you warm."

She knew what we were thinking. We had learned a song in Sunday school with words that rhymed to the effect that one should keep away from the evil cup containing wine or whiskey.

"God won't think this is wrong," she said. "It is medicine now."

It was the first time I had drunk wine. It almost made me gag but it felt wonderfully warm inside.

The train was going to Mersin, the end of the line. That meant that before we reached Mersin we would pass through Adana and Tarsus—Tarsus which had been home to us most of our lives.

Mother and Papa were making plans now. We would go to Tarsus where all our friends were. Mother needed a rest. After that we would go to Mersin, the seaport from which we would leave for America.

Ben Hur was so quiet that Mother unbundled him to see if he was still living. Yes, he was. We all peered at him. He looked so calm.

"It is a miracle that he is living," Papa said.

Some of the soldiers gathered to look at him. We were the only passengers to arouse their curiosity. All the others were French soldiers, happy to be going home.

"I hope you haven't fought in vain," Mother said to them in French.

They were sympathetic. They had known what war was in their own country. They, too, were going home.

[Later independent accounts of American missionaries who remained in Marash showed that of 5,400 Armenians who left Marash to follow the French Army over the mountains, 2,800 died, 1,800 of them when killed by Turks on the outskirts of Marash and 1,000 by freezing in the mountains. In 1986, when my wife, Marlene, and I examined the military archives in Paris, the records showed that the particular French unit the Bagdikians and other Armenians followed through the mountains began with 3,000 men, of whom 1,200 died in the mountains. BHB]

Whenever we went through a tunnel, the train seemed to make a special kind of noise. Or whenever the whistle blew, it seemed to be saying something. I felt myself sinking away in my seat, no longer looking out the window. I thought I could feel the wheels turning, sinking, sinking, sinking...



CHAPTER 15

“I Hate God!”

When I woke up, I was surrounded by doctors and nurses trying to take off my shoes. The toes of my shoes had already burst open but the rest of the shoes had to be cut off. My feet were so swollen that it was not possible to take off the shoes any other way. Whether or not I had fainted, I don't remember. But now I was awake.

I was in such pain that sleep would have been a blessing. It was warm now but my feet hurt and my stomach hurt. And it was too warm. When I saw the strange faces, I cried for Mother. I heard Tirzah's voice.

“I am here too,” she said. “They had to bring us to a hospital. The rest of the family went to Tarsus but they will be back to take us as soon as our feet feel better.”

Tirzah was trying to comfort me. Her feet were swollen too, but only the big toes. I could hear the doctors and nurses talk. Sometimes they talked in English, sometimes Armenian, and some of them talked Turkish. Mostly they talked in Turkish and I could understand them.

“This one is much worse,” one doctor was saying. “We must operate at once.”

They took us to another part of the building. We could not walk, of course, so we were wheeled in. As we went through the corridors we could see patients lying in the hallways. Some looked dead. Some cried out loud. Some sobbed and moaned.

They took us to a room. There must have been a dozen patients. There was a clean bed. What I would have given to have had it a

few days ago. I could have slept so comfortably. Now I was in terrible pain. My stomach ached so much that sometimes I forgot about my feet.

"We are lucky to have a bed in a room," Tirzah said, still trying to comfort me. "Did you see all those other people sleeping in the hallways on cots or on the floor?"

The hospital was filled far above capacity. How could anyone be turned away? We could hear the nurses talk as they came in and out of the room. Some people had frozen ears, frozen noses. They had to operate on them first.

I don't know how many days had passed but I felt sicker every day. I was too ill to listen to Tirzah. I didn't know how sick she was. I just wanted to die. People were dying every day. I could hear the nurses talk. And then sometimes people I did not know would come to the room. They seemed to be friends or relatives.

I missed Mother and Papa. If only they were here.

"Where are they?" I kept asking Tirzah whenever I had the strength to talk.

"They are in Tarsus. Father will come for us as soon as we are better, I am sure," she said.

Tirzah was almost two years older than I but at times she seemed so much older. It seemed that the only time I felt older was when everyone near me was much younger. But now everyone in the hospital seemed much older — except the babies we would hear crying.

"Some babies were born today," we would hear the nurses talking among themselves.

Once in a while I would hear one of them say, "but the mother died." Suddenly I would feel frightened and say, "Where is my mother?"

It seemed Tirzah always could read my mind.

"Our mother is all right," she would say to the nurses and me. Then I would drift into semi-consciousness.

Then one night I cried so much that by morning I must have fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion. I could not move my feet. The bedclothes hurt them. Everything hurt them. Then several doctors

came. Some seemed to be looking at my feet. Others felt my forehead or my pulse.

"We must operate," one of them said.

"Please don't do anything until my father comes," Tirzah begged.

The doctor who had spoken in English was astonished that she had understood him.

"Are you English or American?" he asked.

One of the nurses explained who we were.

"They always speak English," she said. I think she must have been English. There were many nurses there who spoke English. Many Armenians and nurses could speak English, too. There was a very exclusive school for girls in Adana and the wealthy families from that section of the country used to send their daughters there. When they finished at the English or American School, they would send them to Paris.

"Where is your father?" a doctor asked Tirzah.

"In Tarsus," she replied.

"We will send for him," he promised.

I don't know how much time passed or whether it was day or night. But I remember clearly being wheeled to a room they called the operating room. Tirzah was being wheeled with me, too. I felt less frightened about this but a little uneasy when Tirzah kept saying, "But I thought you were going to wait till my father arrived."

"We have sent a telegram to him," a doctor said, "and I am sure he will come as soon as he can catch a train. But if we don't operate now, gangrene might set in."

I didn't know what gangrene was and I don't think Tirzah knew either. "Only two of your toes are affected," the doctor said to Tirzah, "but seven of your sister's."

"What will you do to it?" she asked, frightened. When Tirzah showed any signs of fright, it was a bad sign. It made me more frightened.

"Please don't do anything till my father comes," Tirzah begged.

"Do you want her to die? Or to lose her feet?" the doctor asked.

What alternative did she have for a reply? Then they separated me from Tirzah and strapped me to a table. They uncovered my feet.

"No ether or anesthetic left in the whole hospital?" one doctor asked the nurse.

"That's right," she replied. "We used it for the worst cases—for those who had to have the whole leg amputated.

"Can we wait?" a nurse asked.

"Too risky," someone said. Some talked in English, some in Turkish and some in Armenian or French. Except for the Armenian, I could get the gist of the conversation. Sometimes I wished I could not understand it at all but when they talked in Armenian, I seemed more frightened because then I thought they were going to do terrible things to me.

"The poor child," one doctor said in Turkish, "but she is young and it is a chance we must take. She may thank us later if we are successful in severing the afflicted areas to stop the gangrene and save her feet."

I was in pain. I thought I was in pain until the first jab of the knife. I remember screaming with pain. Several doctors and nurses had to hold me down in spite of the straps around me.

One nurse cried, "Oh God!" and fainted.

"I hate God!" I shouted. "He's making me hurt. It hurts! It hurts!" I kept shouting, but could not move.

I could feel them cutting, I felt slicing, slicing.

"I hate God!" I screamed again. I tried to sit up. Someone covered my face.

"Please kill me!" I cried with pain.

I tried to imagine how it would feel not to be in pain again but each time some one cut another piece. Then they poured something cold on it. After the first shock of cold touch, the pain got worse. It must have been iodine or something.

"If only we could give her something to put her to sleep," someone was saying.

If people could die from pain, I should have died. Today, as I remember—involuntarily—those painful days, I feel that had I been older, I think I could have willed myself to die.

When the horrible nightmare was over—over only to the extent that the pain was not getting worse—the jabbing of the knife had

stopped and I could feel only constant pain, not increasing pain, I thought I was dreaming.

Papa was standing by my bedside.

"I came as fast as I could," he said so lovingly.

Then I heard Tirzah sobbing. I guess they hurt her too. I had been in such pain that I had stopped thinking about her or anybody. Then I cried with pain and with joy in seeing Papa. He was carrying a cane. His feet had frozen too but he would not let them touch it.

"I know it will be all right," he had insisted when Dr. Rejebian looked at it.

In the years to come, how often I have wished that we had gone straight to Dr. Rejebian instead of coming to the hospital.

"But your case was much, much worse," Papa used to say, but I have often wondered. Also, to this day I don't know whether it was my imagination or I really heard Papa tell the doctors he wished they had waited until he arrived. "To operate without anaesthetic!" I think he said.

Papa admitted to me later that one doctor asked him, "Would you prefer a dead daughter, or a legless daughter, or a daughter with just disfigured toes? Would you like to see the other patients in the hospital? The ones without ears? Without noses?"

In comparison, I suppose we had much to be thankful for.

Papa had to go back to Tarsus. We could not be moved yet. We could not even walk. Almost as bad as the cutting operation, I dreaded the changing of the bandages. It was torture all over again. Or had I forgotten so soon that pain could be so much worse?

The days seemed to drag, but the pain was always with me. The only diversion were the activities in the hospital yard. Our ward faced the courtyard where the carriages and a very few automobiles entered. Once in a while I could move just enough to turn my head to see people come and go. The wall facing the courtyard was glass, which helped pass the time of day.

"You are lucky," the nurses would say. "You can watch everything down there. The poor patients in the other rooms and hallways can't see anything."

I was thankful for this and often wondered what God thought of

me because I had said I hated Him. It really worried me. Whenever the pain became more intense than usual, I used to wonder if He was punishing me because I had said I hated Him. I wished Mother was here so I could tell her about this. I just knew she would know what I should do about it.

One morning when I looked out in the courtyard I saw it was raining and the wind was blowing. It seemed so good to have a bed to sleep in, I thought. Then I thought of that first night we left Marash when I had promised God that if I ever had a warm bed again, I would never complain. I had never thought that just a warm bed alone would make one happy. I had not thought of being in horrible pain in a warm bed.

Then one morning, Tirzah called, "Look!"

She pointed to a corner of the courtyard. There was a beautiful peacock, spreading out its wings. It certainly was "proud as a peacock." He acted as if he was on the stage performing to an audience. He certainly had an audience in us. It was the only diversion we had during our hospital days except the dreaded visit of the doctor when it was time to change the dressing. Every time he changed the dressing, he would say, "It looks fine."

I could not understand how anything so painful could look fine.

The doctor would try to encourage us.

"You will soon be walking again," he would try to encourage us. I tried to imagine walking again. Tirzah asked a question which had never occurred to me.

"Will we be lame?"

The question came like a thunderbolt. Why hadn't I thought of it before? In my sudden awakening to this possibility, I missed the answer given by the doctor. I looked at Tirzah's face for the answer. She did not look disturbed but I remembered that only two of her toes—the big toe on each foot—had been affected. I had heard the doctors say seven of mine had been frozen. What had they done to it?

As soon as the doctor left, I asked Tirzah.

"What did he say? What did he say?"

"Oh, we'll be all right. We won't be lame or limp," she said. But

there did not seem to be the usual assurance in her voice.

Maybe noticing that I needed more reassurance, she said, "The doctor said if nothing is cut beyond the first joint, there won't be any limping."

"I want to see my feet!" I demanded, Tirzah being my only audience. "How do we know what they did? It hurt more than the tips. I bet they cut the whole foot—both feet!"

I uncovered the bedclothes. It still looked as if I had feet. The nurse came in. She thought I was going to get up.

"Oh, you mustn't try to get up," she warned.

To get up seemed such an impossibility. I could not even turn in bed because it required turning my feet, which I could not do.

"I bet we will be lame," I said, my voice shaking. It was so easy to cry when one was in pain. Now I was experiencing mental anguish in addition to physical pain.

"Oh, you'll walk just as well as before," the nurse said.

How I wanted to believe her! I wanted to ask so many questions but I felt so tired. Every day I felt so tired and I wanted to sleep but I could never find a comfortable position. It seemed that my feet were always in the wrong position.

At night when I said my prayers I had to lie down while I said them. I knew God could not blame me for not kneeling as I used to. Even if He remembered I had said I hated Him, He could not blame me for not kneeling down. I just could not do it. Then I thought of making a bargain with Him again. I promised Him that if He made my feet well again so I could kneel down, I would never forget my prayers and I would kneel down in the right praying position. I would really be very respectful to Him.

The days of pain and anguish continued. The better I felt the more I would think about Mother and Papa and Cynthia and Nora. And Ben Hur. We really did not know him. We hardly saw him even though for a whole week we walked side by side.

Father had said Mother was not feeling well. I prayed to God that nothing should happen to her. I even made another bargain. I said I'd rather Mother would be all right even if my feet did not get well—even if I had to be lame. I could not imagine living without Mother.

The peacock in the courtyard helped pass the time of day. I would try to count all the colors. We would watch him proudly spread his wings as if putting on a fashion show. I did not know anything about burlesque then. If I had known, I could have passed some more time by interpreting all his movements.

Then one day I almost jumped out of bed. It startled Tirzah.

"What are you trying to do?" she asked.

I was straining my neck to look out as far as I could into the courtyard. I had seen a carriage drive in and I was so sure the person who came out of it was Papa. He must have returned.

"That carriage," I said excitedly. "Papa came out of it."

"You are imagining things," Tirzah said. "Be careful about your feet. If you hit them against anything you know how it will hurt."

I certainly knew. One night I had tried to turn in my sleep and the excruciating pain brought back memories of that horrible operating room. I certainly must not do anything to remember that.

"Father!" Tirzah was shouting.

Yes, he was in our hospital room. Our complete surprise and joy brought a refulgent smile upon his face. Papa always loved to surprise us.

Everyone in the room was happy to see us ready to go. I have often thought when people say this is a selfish world that it really is not. Have you ever thought of the joy people experience to see others happy? Yes, everyone in the room was happy because two little lonesome girls, in great pain for so long, were really smiling with joy.

Our joy was doubled when Papa said, "I have come to take you home."

I did not even stop to think where "home" was. After all, when we left Tarsus for Marash, we had given up our home. Marash would be our home until we went to our final home in America. We had left our home in Marash but we had not reached another "home" yet. Somehow, even at that tender age, I must have instinctively known that home is where the heart is—where our dear ones are—and we were going to be together again.

Apparently the doctors and nurses had known we would be

going home soon. I guess Papa had wired them he was coming. However, there had been no advance preparation. We had not been told anything just in case he could not come or we were unable to be moved.

"You know they cannot walk yet," the doctor said when he faced Papa. "Yes, I know," Papa said. "I can carry one and I have hired someone to carry the other."

He had brought fresh clothing for us—everything but shoes. We would not need them for a while.

As soon as the nurses dressed us, Papa took me in his arms and carried me to the carriage in the courtyard. How good it seemed to have my arms around his neck again. And here I was in the courtyard—the courtyard that I had watched for so long! I did not know how long or which day it was. All I knew was that I was in that courtyard through which one must pass to leave the hospital. Yes, and there was that peacock. Now I was prouder than he even if I could not use my feet with which to strut.

Papa placed me in the carriage waiting for us and went back to get Tirzah. He was still limping but had left his cane in the carriage.

Soon we were all in the carriage. It was an exciting day to be out in the world again. The carriage headed for the railroad station. The sound of the wheels going over the cobblestone streets was the harbinger of happier days ahead. The uneven rhythm of the movement of the carriage on roughly built streets made me even more aware that I was going somewhere—somewhere where I wanted to be.

I wanted to ask Papa so many questions but I was busy looking at the faces of the people outside. It was such an exciting day yet no one seemed to even notice our carriage. Several times the driver swore because children got in his way or because another driver did not give him the right of way. Even his swearing sounded wonderful to me because he was swearing so that we could get to the station on time. We must not miss that train.

At the station, as usual, vendors were selling churegs which I loved ñ doughnut-shaped rolls with plenty of sesame seeds. Papa knew how much I loved them and bought some. It tasted so much

better than hospital food. Or maybe it tasted so good because I was not eating them in the hospital.

The train was not in the station.

"Good," Papa said. "Now we won't have to hurry."

But how I wanted to hurry.

"You wait with her till I come back," Papa said to the driver as he took me in his arms and took me to the station platform. I thought everyone would look at me—a grown up girl of ten. No, eleven. I could not imagine that I was eleven yet because for the first time in my life there had been no birthday party. But, yes, I really was eleven about two months ago. I really did not know what day or month it was. We had left Marash on February 9. We had been on the road a week. How long had I been in the hospital? I did not know.

I had so many questions to ask Papa that this one did not seem too important. While all these thoughts were going through my head I realized that no one was paying any attention to me. I was glad. Most likely through this station thousands had passed during the World War just ended and during many massacres before and after. One small child with bandaged feet was no object of curiosity.

Papa left me sitting on a bench and went for Tirzah. He was sure she would be there in the carriage waiting for him. The driver—most likely a Turk—would not leave her and go. He had not been paid yet and I am sure expected a big "bakshiah"—a tip. Tirzah was twenty months older than I. She must have felt funnier than I about having to be carried, I thought. I wondered, could I walk? Would I be lame? I had not given this too much thought while in the hospital but now I imagined myself walking towards the train when it came.

Papa was not in sight yet. My feet were touching the ground as I sat on the bench. But I had not attempted to step or put any weight on them.

"Let me try," I thought.

The bandages on my feet were clean. I tried to raise myself from the bench, putting my weight on my hands and trying to spread my feet on the ground. My toes felt so sensitive, I did not get beyond putting a little of my weight just on my heels. Just then Papa came around the corner with Tirzah.

"How strong and brave he is," I thought. He had carried us both even though he was still limping. He put Tirzah down on the bench beside me.

"When the train arrives," he said, "I'll take Lydia first and then come back for you," he said to Tirzah.

"Maybe I can walk?" Tirzah asked.

"Not yet," Papa said. "Don't try to walk until Dr. Rejebian sees what they did."

Papa had great confidence in Dr. Rejebian not only as a doctor but also as a friend. He felt, and so we felt, that we would be all right if only we could get to Dr. Rejebian as soon as possible.

When Papa left me on a seat on the train and went back to get Tirzah, a sudden fear gripped me.

"Suppose the train leaves before they come?"

For the first time I felt the full import of my incapacity. In the hospital there was always someone to look after me. With Papa I always felt protected. But now, for the first time since "that operation" I was left alone -on a train that might start before he and Tirzah came back. Papa always had a habit of showing up in the train compartment after the train had left. At times like that Mother was always with us and we knew it was a game, even though sometimes when he did not show up for a long time we would really become anxious.

I imagined the train was moving. A distinguished looking gentleman who had occupied a seat in the same compartment must have sensed my fear.

"Don't worry," he said in Turkish. "Here comes your father now."

I was too anxious to notice the expression on his face but since then have often wondered what the man must have thought to see Papa come toward the train with another young girl in his arms-she, too, with bandaged feet.

As Papa entered the compartment with Tirzah, the gentleman greeted him with salaams. Papa responded in the same manner. The tears of anxiety which had been welling up in my eyes soon turned to tears of relief. Now I was anxious for the train to start. I would be glad to leave a city that I could remember only with thoughts of extreme pain.

Papa began to look for his cane. The horrible thought came to me that he might have left it in the carriage and would run out to get it. And what if he really missed the train this time.

"I have it," Tirzah said.

Such relief seemed to weaken me. Or was it that it was because I had not even sat up in bed since the operation? I was too young to think of those technical points at that time but I do remember feeling faint and wondering what would happen if someone stepped on my feet or if I bumped into something. It was hard for me to forget not only the jab of the knife and scissors during the operation but also the excruciating pain each time the dressing was changed.

Already, the elderly man in the compartment was asking questions and Papa was replying with accurate detail exactly what had happened. I was suffering again in retrospect a pain that was still with me.

"If I start crying," I thought (and how I wanted to cry!), "they might stop talking about it." Instead I tried to fall sleep and the dizziness that was overcoming me helped me to doze off. But dreamless nights and naps were a rare thing now. If I did not live through the entire operation of this most recent torture, I could hear the shots through which we had slept for so many weeks in Marash.

I don't remember what hour of the day we had left or the distance from Adana to Tarsus, but it was still daylight and I heard Papa say, "We're almost there."

I tried to awaken from my state of lassitude. When I realized that arriving at Tarsus meant seeing Mother again, it seemed as if a vial of enthusiasm had been injected in me. I had so many questions I had wanted to ask Papa on this journey but he had been involved in a conversation with the man in our compartment and I had felt too weak and sleepy.

I could still remember the landmarks as we approached the railroad station in Tarsus. Often in those happy days of yesteryear we had taken walks here with the whole family. We had great fun picking wild flowers. Who would be the one to find the prize

flower, the one that we had never seen before? In a bed of wild flowers sometimes we children went wild. Mother and Papa were the judges as to what was different. Often in this attempt we were scratched by thistles but there was always that possible reward and feeling of accomplishment. There were the hills and slopes on which we rolled. And there was the narrow path where I had fallen off a bicycle but not badly hurt. The bicycle had belonged to one of the college boys. I had teased him to let me ride on it.

The train was stopping. Mother would be waiting for us. My lips quivered with emotion. Tears filled my eyes. I wanted to jump from my seat, run down the steps of the train into her arms!

The train had stopped. I sat as still as the train. I remembered I could not walk. I would have to wait to be carried again. I did not have time to dwell too long on my incapacity.

Tirzah was saying, "There they are!" but she could not get up either.

Just as they saw us, Mother, Cynthia, and Nora alighted from the carriage in which they were waiting and ran toward the window through which we were waving.

"Why don't you come out?" Nora was shouting.

We went out but not as Nora had expected us. Maybe no one had told them?

Papa took me in his arms and told Tirzah he would be back for her. The distinguished looking gentleman who had ridden with us offered to take Tirzah. "If only I can control my tears," I thought and looked at Tirzah to see if she was about to cry. Tirzah seldom cried. I used to envy her control. I had tried to emulate her in many ways. I used to envy her athletic prowess. She could run as fast as boys her age. I could not run even as fast as girls my age.

"Now maybe I cannot even walk," I thought, trying to push away all the many thoughts that were passing through my mind. Just now I just wanted to meet Mother without wet eyes.

As soon as Mother saw us with bandaged feet, being carried like helpless babies, she began to weep.

"I am crying because I am so happy to see you," she said as she reached up to kiss me. Then she went toward Tirzah and kissed her

too. Papa introduced her to the gentleman. Cynthia and Nora just stood and looked at us and at our bandaged feet.

"What happened? What happened?" they kept asking.

By now Mother had regained her composure. She pointed to the waiting carriage. Papa and the gentleman followed her directions and placed Tirzah and me inside the carriage. Father thanked the gentleman, they exchanged more salaams, and he returned to the train.

Tirzah and I sat between Mother and Papa. Cynthia and Nora had to ride backwards, facing us. They were asking questions.

"What did they do to you? When can you walk?"

I, too, wanted to hear Mother's reply to these questions. Whatever she answered I knew would also give me the information I needed.

"It takes time for sores to heal," Mother replied, "and we must help Tirzah and Lydia to do what the doctor says so they will get well sooner. We'll buy them the prettiest shoes we can find."

How beautiful it all sounded. But my mind was preoccupied with something that had been bothering me for days and nights.

"I must tell Mother," I thought. "Will she be angry with me? Will she scold me now, at a time like this? Maybe I should not tell her."

I was torn between two decisions. Then I began to cry.

"Does it hurt?" Mother asked, gently putting her arms around me.

"Worse than that," I said and began crying more audibly.

"What is the matter, dear?" she asked, entreatingly.

"I said I hated Him!"

Now it was out.

"You hated whom, dear?" Mother asked.

"I shouted I hate Him, I hate Him!" I said. "They were cutting me up to pieces. It hurt so much, so I shouted 'I hate Him. I hate God!'"

Then I waited. I thought it would shock Mother. She had always taught us respect for our Creator and I had failed her. I had committed a sin.

"Never mind, dear," Mother replied calmly. "God won't mind. He knows how you must have suffered. He knows what it means to be in pain. Remember, how He was crucified?"

"I think they stuck nails in my feet too," I said, although this

thought had not occurred to me before. "Whatever they did, it hurt just as much. They just stuck knives and scissors, and nails," I cried out, feeling very much a heroine.

"Yes, dear," Mother said, suffering, I am sure, vicariously with me. Even Nora was quiet. Tirzah corroborated all that I said.

"It really hurt terribly, Mother," she said. "I heard the doctors and nurses say there was no anesthetic, nothing to put us to sleep while they operated."

Tirzah had said what I had wanted to say but I could not remember the word for anaesthetic or chloroform. Tirzah was almost two years older than I was, but she seemed to know so much more. And she could understand people when they talked Armenian. She had more lessons than I. In the hospital the doctors and nurses talked in Armenian after they found out we could talk English and could understand Turkish. They did not know Tirzah could understand a little Armenian. Maybe they said things we should not have known. Anyway, Tirzah knew.

My confession was over. I was relieved.

So much had happened, yet we were just now leaving the station grounds. I could remember another special occasion when we had ridden in the carriage to this same station. It was Armistice Day. How triumphant all the Christians in the city had felt! They had won! The Turks had lost! But here we were, only a little over a year later, coming back defeated, devoid of health and wealth. Coming back to a home we had given up. Coming back from a home we had made until we were ready to make our final home. But thanks to my New God — He was a New God to me now — a God who could really forgive, a God who was not at all terrible. We were all together again and we still had a chance to go to our final home — America. Yes, this time we were going, as soon as possible.

"When are we going to America?"

My question seemed to surprise Mother and Papa. It had come after a relative silence, following my confession.

"We will start tomorrow," Papa announced. It was a surprise to us children but Mother did not seem surprised.

"Doctor Rejebian will come tomorrow and look at your feet and

Tirzah's and also examine Mother. As soon as he says we may start, we will."

To look at my feet meant to change the dressing. That was a horrible thought. I knew how they would hurt. But if it was the fastest way to start for America, I would not mind suffering. Maybe it would not hurt so much this time. Maybe Dr. Rejebian won't let it hurt the way the other doctors did.



CHAPTER 16

Constantinople

Now we were passing by the street on which we had lived in Tarsus. We could not see the house as it was around a bend at the end of the street. But we were passing by the park. Would there be anyone we knew—Turks or Armenians?

"I don't see anyone I know," Tirzah said.

"Almost all the Turkish girls your age will now be wearing zahars — veils. That means they are grown up," I said. "And the boys must now all be circumcised," I added nonchalantly.

Mother and Papa laughed.

"What does that mean?" Nora asked.

"Oh, you were too little to remember," I said. "I remember when the Turkish boy had his party."

I think I helped Papa answer Nora's question.

"When Turkish girls reach their teens they are considered grown up ladies and they wear veils. When boys become thirteen, they, too, have a party," Papa answered, which seemed to satisfy Nora for the time being.

But she asked, "Did you go to the boy's party, Lydia?"

"Girls are not invited to boys' parties," Mother replied.

"Why?" Nora asked.

"Roger Minor came to one of our birthday parties," Cynthia added.

"But we're not Turks," Papa replied. "That is a Turkish custom."

Now Papa was bowing and making the signs of salaam to acquaintances whom we were passing. We were anxious to reach "home" because we wanted to see Ben Hur. Tirzah and I had not

seen him since we left for the hospital. And we really had not seen him much on our journey of escape, even though we walked all the way from Marash side by side with him and Elmas.

"Where is Elmas?" Tirzah asked. "She is still with us," Mother replied. "She has been very good to stay with us and look after Ben Hur."

"Has she decided to go to America with us?" Papa asked Mother.

"I don't think she will go," Mother replied. "I told her she would be welcome to go with us and stay with the us when we reached America or feel free to leave us there. I think she has someone in mind," Mother said softly. "He came to see her several times."

"I hope so," Papa said. "She has had a sad life, losing husband and both children. Maybe she can find new happiness now."

I knew they must be talking about her getting married again, although I thought she was too old for that. She must have been almost thirty. That seemed so old to me.

We arrived at a friend's house, our home until we were to leave for America. Elmas came to meet us with Ben Hur in her arms. We were all together again. Such happiness I had not known for so very long. At least it seemed very long. I wept with joy.

Then into this joy was injected sadness that I was to know for many years to come. People were asking Papa about our flight. I did not want to listen. When he reached the point about Tirzah's and my hospitalization, I used to squirm and try to leave the room. Even though my bandaged feet were still painful, it was nothing compared to that horrible torture while on the operating table. I could not even walk out of the room.

When the subject came up, I would say, "My feet are hurting," and Mother would beckon to Papa to stop talking about it in my presence.

Many visitors came to our "home" here in Tarsus to hear about our exodus from Marash, to ask about friends and relatives who had met the same fate. Or maybe they had decided to remain in Marash. Was there any news about what happened to those who chose to remain behind?

I used to dread the coming of visitors. That would mean Papa

telling the story again and my feet would hurt more.

Then one day Dr. Rejebian came from Mersin. I had never seen Papa hug a man before, but he and Papa hugged each other and almost cried. Yes, I think their eyes did fill up.

Then Dr. Rejebian wanted to examine Mother. She was sick in bed.

"Look at Tirzah's and Lydia's feet first," Mother said.

This meant the changing of the bandages, and I felt that dreadful pain before he even began unbandaging. What would he say? How soon would I be able to walk? I knew that whenever I could walk, Tirzah could walk a little sooner because her case was not quite so bad as mine. Maybe because she was older, she was stronger and her feet stronger than mine. Maybe that's why she had not had so many toes frozen.

Because I always hid my face with my hands every time the dressing was changed, I could not see Dr. Rejebian's face at this unveiling. Neither could anyone see my face which writhed with the anticipation of pain. Then the pain became a reality all too soon.

"I would like to take them to my hospital for a while," I finally heard him say.

"That means our journey to America will be delayed," I thought.

Papa must have been thinking the same thing.

"When do you think we should plan to go?" Papa asked him.

Without answering, Dr. Rejebian said he wanted to examine Mother and Ben Hur, too.

Several days later we were all boarding a train for Mersin—our whole family and Dr. Rejebian. Elmas had decided to remain in Tarsus. We all said goodbye to her and it was very sad. Mother and Papa thanked her again for having taken such good care of Ben Hur and maybe saving his life.

"Give her all the gold you can," I heard Mother say.

"I did," Papa answered, "which leaves us practically nothing."

"Never mind," Mother replied. "When you go to Constantinople, I am sure you can sell all the necklaces and bracelets we wore when we left Marash." Just then the thought came to me that I had not seen the necklaces and bracelets ever since the day we boarded the train at Islahia.

"Where are the ones I was wearing?" I asked Mother.

"I took them off when you were so sick and they took you to the hospital in Adana," Mother replied.

I must have been pretty sick or unconscious because I did not even remember getting off the train or being taken to the hospital. If I had been conscious or aware of what was happening, I would have found it hard to part from Mother when the train continued on to Tarsus. There was no hospital in Tarsus, which is why Mother had been willing to let us be taken to the hospital in Adana. Besides, she herself had been too ill to protest.

The train ride from Tarsus to Mersin was a short one. Mrs. Rejebian met us at the station with the family carriage. We could not all get in one carriage so another one was hired and we arrived at Dr. Rejebian's house in two carriages.

It was a beautiful house. We could see the seashore from it. As soon as we had supper, Tirzah and I were taken to Dr. Rejebian's hospital, which was across the courtyard from his house.

It was sad to be in a hospital again, but comforting to know that across the yard were the rest of the family.

Dr. Rejebian came everyday and changed the dressing himself. I used to dread his calls because he used to yank the bandages which hurt terribly. But he used to say it would hurt all at once and not last so long. I could not decide which would be better, to have it changed gently and hurt a little less for a longer time or have that dreaded pull which hurt so terribly.

Papa came to see us several times a day. Mother came once a day and then, gradually, she did not come at all.

One day Papa came to tell us that he was leaving for Constantinople but that Mother and the rest of the family would still be at Dr. Rejebian's house until we were ready to walk. And then we would join him in Constantinople. I cried when I kissed him goodbye but he comforted me by saying that this time the goodbye was the beginning of good plans in the making.

Now we would miss Papa's daily visits. Mrs. Rejebian would come to see us and said she was not allowing Mother to come because Mother needed to rest. We said Mother must really be ill or

she would certainly come. Mrs. Rejebian asked us if we would want her to come to visit us if getting out of bed would make her sicker. We would not think of such a thing so we stopped asking her when Mother was going to come. But we knew she must be quite ill.

Soon we became acclimated to the hospital routine. Every day a new patient would come, some who had been in the Adana hospital, some who had come directly here. There were some patients we had known from Marash who were suffering the same fate as we. Dr. Rejebian's hospital was full.

Then one day Dr. Rejebian said Tirzah could try to walk. She walked a few steps. I was so envious.

"You may try also in a few days," Dr. Rejebian had promised me.

That night I had tried to see if I could kneel down to pray, but I could not as my toe could not bear any weight. I told God I had not forgotten my promise but that I really was not ready yet and I felt He believed me because it really hurt for me to kneel down.

When Dr. Rejebian said I might try to walk one day, I cried with joy. It seemed I was always crying about something, about being happy, about being sad, about being in pain. We walked a little each day and Dr. Rejebian said Mother was getting better, too, and that soon we would be on the sea that we could see in the distance, on our way to Constantinople to join Papa.

The next day we dressed and were allowed to walk to Dr. Rejebian's house across the courtyard. We could not wear shoes but we were brought slippers that had been ripped open at the toes. So the slippers were strapped to our bandaged feet. We remained a few days at Dr. Rejebian's house and it seemed good not to be in a hospital.

The day came when we were really packing to take the ship. There was not much to pack, mostly clothes for Ben Hur. We asked Dr. Rejebian if we would have to go to a hospital in Constantinople. He said if we behaved ourselves and did not run around with bare feet, we would soon be wearing shoes with high heels like his daughters.

I could not imagine ever wearing shoes again, let alone high heels. But Dr. Rejebian was always joking. But I wanted to believe

him because he had such beautiful daughters who could speak English, French, Greek, Armenian, and Turkish and they not only wore high-heeled shoes but always wore beautiful clothes.

Dr. Rejebian and his family took us to the boat that was to take us to Constantinople. It was a very small ship and I was frightened. Mother was too weak to carry Ben Hur. Sometimes she let Tirzah carry him but not for very long as she was afraid it might be too much for anyone not able to wear shoes yet. I wanted so much to carry him, too, so Mother let me hold him, but only while I sat down.

It was fun to go anywhere with Mother. She always had such delightful stories to tell about all the places we saw. I used to wonder how it was possible for one person to know so much. One night she started to tell us about Cyprus because our ship was going to stop there and we became excited that we would see land again. But she had to stop because suddenly Tirzah became seasick. I thought I was going to be seasick, too, but I did not. Then I was proud to think that Tirzah had been seasick and I had not. Could it be possible that in this respect I was more grown up than Tirzah?

But then I saw much more grownup people getting sick. I was so proud that I was not seasick. When the ship stopped at Cypress, Tirzah stopped being seasick. The ship did not go right up the island and the passengers had to get on a small boat to go the island from the ship and others from the island came by small boats to our ship. There were many English soldiers.

Our next stop was the island of Rhodes. The ship went right up to the land and anchored under a clump of trees. We could touch the fruit of the trees. They were "yeni-dunya" trees. The literal translation is "new world." It is a yellowish, meaty fruit with stones that look like chestnuts and are as big. When the fruit is really ripe, it is sweet and sometimes quite tart, like the difference between sweet apples and sour apples. Since we did not know the English word for this fruit, Mother said we might as well call it "New World," and that seemed a good idea because we were going to the New World anyway.

Mother said she must find out the name of this fruit as soon as

we arrived in America as none of the missionaries could tell her since, they said, there was no such fruit in America.

The shoreline was so densely covered with trees that we really could not see the island. Some people got off the ship and others came on. Soon we were off again but unfortunately we had to give up our place on this ship to another family. We were very much upset but Mother said she knew this would happen but she did not want to postpone our departure from Mersin to Constantinople, and this was the first ship we could get, provided we would be willing to take what we could get from the Island of Rhodes to Smyrna.

We were not very comfortable that night as we all had to spend the night on deck and tried to find the best shelter we could. That night a storm broke out and the ship tossed and rolled. Tirzah got sicker and sicker and had to run to the rail. After a while it was too dangerous for her to get near the rail as someone almost went overboard.

Mother became ill but not seasick. I had a chance to look after Ben Hur that night and clutched him hard so he would not slip out of my arms and go overboard. The sea became furious as it got darker and darker. Soon billows of waves swept the deck and we were all drenched. We spent the night this way and fell asleep towards morning from sheer exhaustion and anxiety.

Several times during the night I could hear Mother say, "If only your father were here. He would find some way for us to get better accommodations."

The sun shining on my face awakened me. I had expected to wake up to a turbulent sea but all was calm and the ship was not moving. It was like opening my eyes in Paradise. What I saw before me was one of the most beautiful sights I had ever seen. We were in a beautiful harbor, with beautiful sail boats anchored in little coves. The houses on the island looked like fairy tale pictures. I wished we could disembark right there, but I knew we must go on to meet Papa in Constantinople. Maybe, I thought, there would not be another horrible night like last night. Maybe we could have our original accommodations again. But just now we were glad to be on deck. Our clothes and bed clothing were drying, the sun was

beautiful, and we were looking at fairy land.

Mother seemed so ill that I did not ask her where we were. I regretted this years later because so often I wondered if I had imagined this scene. It was so vivid in my mind yet Mother had not told us anything and, we had completely forgotten about it. In my adult years this picture would come to my mind's eye time and time again. Then one day, many years later, while sitting under a hair dryer, I was glancing through a copy of LOOK magazine and there suddenly I saw that Paradise of so long ago. It was a painting from memory of the island of Poros, Greece, in the Aegean Sea that Dame Cosmy Hulitar had painted at the age of 85.

I could not be mistaken. Here is that same fairy land I had seen as a child. My hair dresser must have sensed something unusual. She came by and turned off the drier.

"Is something the matter?" she asked.

I showed her the picture that had startled me.

"I was here as a child, but never knew the name of the island. It was even more beautiful than the picture, because it was at sunrise when I first saw it. The air was fresh and the people still asleep and except for the ripple of the water, not a sound could be heard."

I sounded so enthusiastic that she said, "If you'll promise to write about it, you may tear the page out of the magazine and keep it." And to this day I still have it.

When we arrived in Smyrna, the ship went right up to the harbor. It did not seem necessary to get on a small boat to get to the pier. We got on a larger ship but didn't have time to go on land. Mother took us right up on deck where we could see the entire city of hills.

We were so near the city that we could see the streetcars, some drawn by horses and some seemed to whiz by without any horses. It was the first time we had seen streetcars, so Mother explained about the "horseless" carriages. We could see some beautiful houses.

Vendors came on board ship. Mother bought some figs, saying we might hear about "Smyrna figs" when we went to America because this city was famous for its figs. We asked Mother how she knew so much about so many places. She said we could learn just

as much from reading. She also said Father had stopped in Smyrna on his way to Beirut years ago when he had gone to take a post-graduate course at the University of Beirut before they were married. This was where Papa, knowing Mother did not like men with mustaches, had grown not only a mustache but also a beard. He had stopped in Smyrna to have a picture taken to send to her just to tease her. Mother had written back to say she had not realized she was going to marry such an old man. That had done the trick. Papa was only four years older than Mother.

So here we were in Smyrna, looking at the city from the deck of our ship.

"Where will we stop next?" we had asked and I wondered where Mother found out all the answers. At dusk we left Smyrna Harbor and the next stop would be Constantinople.

We would be united again with Papa and the next ship we took would be for America, and we would be all together again. By that time Tirzah and I would be wearing shoes again. Dr. Rejebian had promised that we would land in America with shoes. Just now we were still wearing slippers with slashed toes. We were thankful for this because each day we could walk better and better- and we were not limping!

One day, Mother herded us on deck.

"This is the Strait of Bosphorus," she said.

We had gone through the Dardanelles and knew that when we reached the Strait of Bosphorus, we would be nearing Constantinople.

We knew all about Constantinople. Mother had planned to attend Roberts College here as a young girl to take a post-graduate course. But she had fallen in love and married Papa instead. But she had read all about Constantinople when she first knew she would be going to school there.

She promised to take us on the ferry boats back and forth from Constantinople proper to the city of Scutari on the Asian side of the city.

There was so much to see as we approached Constantinople. Mother pointed out Saint Sophia to us and promised we would go

to see it. There were many other mosques—those of Achmet, Solyman the Magnificent, Bajazet. We were anxious to see the palace, and Robert College, but Mother was excited and we, too, were excited—we could see Papa waiting for us at the pier.

He always managed to get where he wanted. Among hundreds waiting at the shore, we could see him. We forgot about the city. That could wait. I don't know how we managed getting off the ship but somehow we did and the next thing I knew we were in a ferry boat going to Scutari. Papa had found a place for us to live there.

When we got off the ferry, we took a carriage to "our" house. This was the first time we would be in a "house" of our own since we left Marash. We went by carriage over cobblestone streets. The city looked clean and there were many beautiful houses.

We were anxious to see what kind of house ours would be. The carriage stopped in front of a huge gate. Papa herded us through the gate to the yard. It was beautiful! But it did not look like an ordinary house. Apparently Mother knew what to expect, but we did not. We soon found out.

Papa had managed to find temporary work while making plans to go to America. There was a Protestant Church that needed a preacher. Papa was a good preacher and there were many people here in Constantinople who had known him from Tarsus. Some of them had been his pupils in St. Paul's College. The church needed an interim preacher and why not Father? He could preach Sundays and his family could use the parish house.

During the week Papa managed to care for the needs of the parishioners. Many needed not only spiritual guidance but wanted news of dear ones from Marash and Tarsus, news Papa could give them. He also had time to visit merchants during the week to see what price he could get for the jewelry we had saved. The price from these would pay for our passage to America. Papa had sold most of the jewelry. Constantinople was a good market. It was a rich city with rich, beautiful ladies. I had been entranced on the ferry boat to see so many beautiful women with so many beautiful clothes.

We didn't have to "go to church" that Sunday. We just went from

one building to another, in the same yard. Papa was preaching in Turkish. Somehow the language in the sermon was hard to understand, so I fell asleep. I think I wanted to sleep because it seemed every time Papa talked, he talked about our flight and I did not want to hear about that anymore. Already people were asking about our feet and every time they asked, my feet seemed to hurt.

Somehow, Sunday ended and Mother promised we would go to the "city" to see the sights. We took the ferry boat again and it seemed this time the ladies were even more beautiful. Then we went to the bazaars with the big iron shutters. We saw beautiful fabrics. What beautiful dresses they would make!

We took our first streetcar ride in a horseless carriage. We went by the palace, the old Seraglio. We saw Robert College, we visited some friends and when they started to ask questions about our flight, I asked Mother if I might go out to play. It was a lovely yard and quiet, and I did not have to listen to the grownups.

We went to the ferry boats by carriage this time. We wanted to ride on a streetcar again but Mother was afraid someone would step on Tirzah's or my feet. I think it pained her as much as it did us. On the ferry boats I again gazed at the beautiful ladies and tried to decide which ones were Turks and which ones Armenians, or French, or English, or American. They all looked alike but one day I had overheard the grownups say that no wonder Constantinople had beautiful ladies—during the war the Turks had their pick of the most beautiful Armenian girls and no doubt many of these ladies with Turkish men were Armenian girls forced into such marriages. Maybe they were too young to even remember what had happened. The parents of most of these girls had been massacred so they knew no other family.

I tried to listen to them talk but everyone was talking Turkish or French. Many of the rich Turks and Armenians could speak French fluently. They had been educated in French schools or had been sent to France to study.

The ride on the ferry boats always seemed so short because there were so many people to gaze at and so many sights to watch.

Mother kept her promise to take us to see Saint Sophia. She did

not know if we could get in. It was not far from our house, so we all started to walk, Papa carrying Ben Hur because we said he should see it too in case he did not have a chance to come back from America later to see it. [I did see it again, in 1956, as an American newspaper correspondent, and a second time with my wife, Marlene.] There was no one at the gate so there was no one from whom we could ask permission.

"Maybe it is too early in the morning," Mother said. But I think she purposely picked this time.

Papa tried the door. It opened. Papa called, as if expecting someone. There was no answer.

"The only way we can arouse someone," he said, "is to go in and see what happens."

So we all went in and Mother explained everything she could. The ceiling seemed so high. That's what I remember most. We children soon tired of walking but Mother said some day we would be very glad we had seen such an edifice and that we would never forget it.

On our way out we met a Turk and Papa said "Salaam" to him and handed him a coin, a bakshiah, so all was well.

Papa left us at home and went to the "city" to get our passports and tickets. We were soon to sail for America.

"This time when we go on a ship, you'll be with us," we had said to Papa. Mother seemed relieved at the thought. Mother was preparing to pack again.

"Not much to pack," she said.

Mother and Papa had bought us only enough clothing to take care of us until we arrived in America. Baggage, therefore, was not going to be our problem. Tirzah and I had brand new shoes bought in Constantinople but we were not to wear them until we landed in New York. By that time our toes should be healed and not so sensitive to touch.

The remaining days went fast. Soon we were on a boat again.

"First we will go to Greece," Papa had said, "and from there we will take the boat to America."

On the way to Greece, the boat stopped at the Island of Crete.

"One more place for you to see," Mother said. "Try to remember all these places. When you are grown up, it will seem like a dream but you will be glad for having seen so many places."

One night we passed through a very narrow gorge. It seemed the boat would touch land on both sides. We were on deck, feeling sleepy as it was nightfall, but Mother tried to keep us awake.

"It is such a beautiful sight and the stars above are twinkling. I am sure you will want to remember this night even if you cannot remember where we are."

Tirzah was seasick quite often and in this respect I felt more grown up than she. I had not been seasick yet. The sea air seemed to do Mother good. She looked better already. The days on board ship went by happily.

We arrived in the Greek seaport of Piraeus at dusk. We were to leave for Patras early the next morning on another boat. We rived at a hotel in Piraeus and before we could even rest for a few minutes, Mother rushed us all to the roof the hotel.

"We must see it before it gets dark," she said to Papa.

"Of course," he said and we all rushed to the hotel roof and Mother began to give us a lesson, a sightseeing tour from the hotel top.

"There," she pointed, "is the ancient city of Athens. Unfortunately, we will not have time to see it tomorrow as our boat for Patras leaves too early in the morning. "But you can see the Parthenon on the Acropolis."

Mother had been right in rushing us to the hotel rooftop. It was getting darker and darker. We could see the sun setting on the ancient city of Athens.

Piraeus was a noisy city it seemed. The noises sounded like people fighting, not just talking. Papa was curious to find out what was happening, I think, so he made an excuse for going down to get us all cold drinks. It was a hot night and we were thirsty. Mother said we should not drink water from any faucets. Why, we did not know, but Mother always seemed to know why, so we took her word that the running water in this city was not purified.

Before Mother was through explaining about the water,

Papa came back with a drink that tasted like Seven-Up. It was very refreshing.

"Almost like Lemonade," Papa said winking at me.

We wanted to know what all the noise was about. Papa started to say somebody was shooting somebody, but Mother started to point at some other landmark in Athens and called our attention to the beautiful sunset, so Papa did not have time to tell all about the shooting.

"I'll listen to them while I make believe I'm asleep," I thought. But by the time we went to bed I forgot that I was going to listen and before I knew it Mother was waking us up again.

"The boat for Patras will be leaving very soon," she said, so we all jumped out of bed. There would be just this last trip to Patras and the next boat would take us directly to America.

The days were going by fast. We were all together. Tirzah and I were walking quite well and briskly by now, although we were still wearing slippers with the slit front. Dr. Rejebian had said by the time we got on the boat that took us to America we could wear regular slippers without the slit front, and that the day we arrived in America we could wear shoes. What a long time it seemed since we last wore shoes. That was the middle of February and now it was May.



CHAPTER 17

I Can Skip

Mother was counting her brood to lead them to the boat for Patras. Papa was helping us to the gang plank. There was a lot of jabbering and shouting. Everyone seemed to be talking Greek. We were in Greece so this was natural, although it did not seem so to me.

It was another beautiful day and the morning air was still fresh. Everyone seemed to be on deck to see the boat leave Piraeus harbor. Papa was out of sight as usual but he soon returned to us to say he had been to every section of the ship already. Mother was pointing out more historical spots to us, saying we may never have a chance to come back to Greece and that if she talked about it while we were right here, we might remember it for the rest of our lives. [Years later, Lydia and Cynthia did, in fact, see Greece again, as young American tourists. BHB]

It seemed like a short trip from Piraeus to Patras, maybe because Tirzah did not become seasick this time and it was such a beautiful day. Someone was already pointing out land and saying, "Patras," when suddenly we heard shooting. Again! Bullets whizzed by.

Then we saw the men who were doing the shooting. One of them ran right by us, followed by another who was still shooting. Everyone screamed and ducked. Mother gathered us all together and started to take us down to our stateroom. I was trying to hide my face in order not to see anymore shooting but I could not help pulling my hands off my face when I saw one of the men jump into the sea. The other one shot at him right in the water. Then the officers on board ship caught him.

A lifeboat was lowered to rescue the man who had jumped overboard. When danger of the shooting had stopped, everyone went on deck again to find out what was going on.

"They must be Turks," I said to Mother.

"No, they are Greeks," she said. "Unfortunately, there are bad men among all nations. Good and bad," she added.

I never did find out why they were fighting or whether or not the man who had jumped overboard was found dead or alive. While we approached the harbor at Patras, the first boat that came to meet our ship was a police boat. They took the man who had been shooting. There was more jabbering and excitement. Then other boats came to meet the ship as the ship could not go right to the pier.

We were now in Patras, going to a hotel to wait for the last lap of our trip.

The next day we were all waiting in line—the men in one line and the women in another. We had to be examined by the doctor before we would be allowed to go on the boat for America. Everybody was talking about trachoma.

"What is trachoma?" we asked Mother.

"A contagious eye disease," she explained, "but don't worry about it. None of us has it."

If Mother said we did not have it, I knew we did not have to worry about it. But I felt sorry to hear about what had happened to other people. There was a lady near the waiting line who was speaking Turkish. She was telling another lady about a family who had arrived in New York. The doctors there had examined everyone again and found one of the girls in a family had trachoma. They would not allow her in the United States. The family would not part from her so they all returned from America.

"How sad," I thought and did not realize I was crying.

"Don't cry, little girl," someone was saying. "A little girl with such bright eyes could not have trachoma."

I did not realize that they had noticed me listening. Then they noticed my bandaged feet in the slit slippers. The doctor had asked Mother and Papa about Tirzah's and my feet. He wanted to make

sure we did not have anything contagious. Papa began telling all about how it happened, and I wanted to run away. I never wanted to hear about it again. I could not understand how Tirzah could just sit there and listen about it.

"I guess she is much braver than I am," I thought as I had thought many times in the past.

When talk of trachoma had subsided, I heard people saying the ship had broken down and God knew when we would start for America. Mother and Papa finally came out of the doctor's office (why they had gone there a second time, I did not know).

I said, "The ship broke down. We can't go to America."

"What are you talking about?" Papa said.

"I heard it," I said.

"You're always hearing things," Papa laughed.

"But she's generally right," Mother said.

"What language did you hear it in?" Tirzah asked.

It seemed we were in the land of Babel. One could hear Greek, French, English, Armenian, Turkish. There were several people on their way to America with us who had left Marash with us.

"I heard someone say it in Turkish and someone else said it in English."

"There must be several boats going to America. Maybe it is not ours that is broken," Mother said optimistically.

"I'll find out," Papa said and disappeared.

"What will happen if we can't go? Where will we live?"

Mother was receiving a volley of questions as usual.

"When God shuts one door, He opens another," Mother said, "so we won't worry about it, even if it is true."

We saw Papa returning, smiling. So I thought I had heard wrong.

"It is true," he said. "Lydia heard it right."

His smiling face and the news he announced seemed incongruous.

"While the Susquehanna is being repaired," he said, "the steamship company will pay the expenses of all the passengers. We will just have a few days' vacation in this city, then..."

"What is the Susque...the Susque...?" Nora interrupted.

"That's the name of the ship on which we will arrive in America," Papa answered.

"What a funny name," Cynthia said.

"You might as well learn the correct way to pronounce it and to spell it," Mother said, "since we will be on the ship for some time. It is also the name of a river in America."

Mother was our encyclopedia.

"When we arrive in America," Papa used to say to her, "you must teach the Americans about America."

Every time he said this, we children used to go into a gale of laughter.

We were back at our hotel. It had seemed a short walk from the building where we had our physical examination. Tirzah and I could walk quite well by now. We just had to be careful not to stub our toes against anything. I was also afraid someone would step on my feet. Just thinking about it was painful.

Everyone in the lobby was talking about the ship's breaking down. Someone said it would take a few days, some said a week, two weeks. Some minded the delay more than others. Mother said we would just make the best of it. God had brought us as far as Greece, there was no danger of enemies, there would be no extra expense to passengers by this delay, "and best of all, we are all together and well, so why should we complain?"

Maybe the first class passengers were given first class hotel accommodations, but passengers in our category were assigned camp-type hotels. "Now, we'll have an experience like gypsies," Mother said. "We may never have another chance like this," making it sound very romantic.

I don't remember whether the food was good or bad, probably because food never did interest me in my younger days. However, I remember vividly visiting all the orchards we could. We spent most of the time hiking. I don't remember a single rainy day. Every day rumors would start that we would sail the next day. The next day would come with its rumor for the next day but somehow we did not mind waiting. We were all together, we were well, we had no fears, and it was the beautiful month of May. There was nothing to

do but sleep and eat and take advantage of seeing the sights.

One day, Mother decided that since girls in America were now wearing their hair short, it might be well for us to have our pigtailed cut. Papa did not think this necessary. Nora was anxious to have hers cut as soon as possible. Cynthia did not want hers cut at all. I was indifferent about it.

Papa did not give a chance for Tirzah to express her opinion. He compromised with Mother. He said it would be all right if Cynthia, Nora, and I had our pigtailed cut but he felt Tirzah would not since in a few days she would be thirteen years old which meant she would be a grown up young lady.

Mother agreed. One of our days of leisure, therefore, was spent at the barber's. First went Nora's pigtailed, then Cynthia's, then mine. It felt queer to see my hair falling on the floor. My head felt so light. It seemed to go with my light heart, a heart that had not felt light for a long time past and a very, very long time to come.

Shortly after we left the barber shop, Cynthia began to cry.

"Now everyone will think I am a boy," she sobbed.

"I don't care if everyone thinks I'm a boy," Nora announced, "because then I can jump and run like a boy."

"In a very short time it will be long again," Mother began to comfort Cynthia, "and if you don't want to have it cut again, you don't have to until we have our own home again. During the ocean voyage, it will be much easier to wash and comb short hair."

"What about Tirzah?" Cynthia argued.

"Tirzah can wash and comb her own hair now," Mother reminded Cynthia—who would let no one comb her hair except Mother.

"Now you can comb your own hair," Mother said.

But I was listening less and less to this conversation. My attention was drawn to a group of beautiful ladies wearing very high-heeled shoes. I looked at my bandaged feet and forgot my light head and light heart. Then I remembered the new shoes in the trunk, waiting for me. I tried to imagine how it would feel to wear shoes again. Would it hurt?

Then I saw a beggar on the sidewalk, selling thread and needles, and he had no feet. He would never wear shoes even if he had a

trunk full of them. I began to cry.

"I'm the only one who hasn't cried because of a hair cut," Nora boasted, and I let everyone think that's why I was crying.

"When we get to America," Mother said, "you will find almost all the little girls will have short hair."

I wondered how Mother could possibly know so much about a place where she had never been. I often had asked this question.

"The next best thing to being in a place," she used to say, "is to read about it."

But somehow no matter how much I read, it seemed I just did not know about all these things.

"The older you get, the more you will understand," was the reply I had heard so many times.

"To grow older would be such a wonderful thing," I used to think and I had a habit of gazing at old people, wondering how much they must know. And somehow, it seemed to me, old people always gazed at me, too.

"Maybe they can guess how little I know," I used to think, not realizing that they must have stared at me because I stared at them. I used to think knowledge must be hidden between their wrinkled faces and hands.

Suddenly I felt myself trailing behind the rest of the family but following them with one eye and noticing my surroundings with the other. We were near the harbor now. There were several large ships. I wondered which one was the *Susquehanna*. Papa was pointing at one of the ships. I ran towards him so I could hear what he was saying.

"That's our ship," he said.

"Yes," Mother said, "that's our ship, the ship that will take us home."

I watched the large ships and the small boats. I thought how frightened I would be to ride over the big waves in the small boats but people who were riding in them all over the harbor and far out into the sea did not seem to be frightened. Then I thought of the shooting episode on the ship that had brought us from Piraeus to Patras.

"Mother, do people shoot each other in America?" I asked.

"There are good and bad people everywhere," Mother replied, "but in America there are many more good people than bad people, so I am sure we will never have to be afraid of anyone in America."

"I'll knock them down if they're bad," Nora said bravely and we all laughed as we always did when Nora spoke.

Papa hired a carriage and we all got in. He spoke a few words in Greek and then in Turkish to the driver. Many of the Greeks could speak Turkish. The driver then shook his head and off we went.

"Where are we going?" we all asked together, as usual.

"We're going to the outskirts of the city," Mother said, "so we can see the beautiful countryside."

It was another beautiful day and it seemed to feel more and more beautiful as we approached orchards with blossoms and fruits. The carriage stopped at the entrance to an orchard. Papa got out and helped us all down. While we were in the carriage Mother had been carrying Ben Hur. While we walked Papa always carried him.

"If we can find the owner of the orchard," Papa said, "I'll buy some fruit for the children."

Papa would eat nothing but fruit for dessert and it seemed we had inherited his tastes. We entered the orchard and walked and walked but could find no one from whom we could buy anything. Nora started to climb a tree.

"I'll get you some fruit," she said.

"That tree does not belong to us," Mother said, "therefore it is not right for you to climb it or to pick any fruit."

I heard her tell Papa that maybe that would be the only way we would find the owner, that most likely if we tried to pick fruit, the owner would find us immediately.

"Let's try it," Tirzah said, and we all laughed, except Cynthia who was still very unhappy about losing her long pigtails. But soon she joined Nora who was skipping up the road.

"I wonder if I can skip," I thought and I tried, very gingerly at first, and then a little more bravely. I could do it!

"Look, Mother," I shouted. "I can skip, too!"

Mother's eyes filled up.

"Bravo!" Papa shouted.

Tirzah had already run and skipped the day before. She knew she could if she wanted to, but she was trying to act her age—she was almost thirteen!

A man was coming toward us. Father spoke to him. He seemed to be bargaining. Papa was wonderful at bargaining. Soon the man was bowing and smiling and pointing at all the trees. Papa gave him some money and the man bowed again and went away.

"He said we could pick all the fruit we want to," Papa grinned.

So we picked and ate fruit and ran from tree to tree. There were more "new world" trees than I had seen anyplace else.

Nora had filled both her pockets.

"I can't eat all of it now," she said, "so I'll eat it later."

"We paid for what we could eat," Mother said. "Therefore, we must not take even a single bit of fruit with us."

Nora had to empty her pockets and couldn't understand what difference it made.

"Go ahead and eat all you want," Papa said, teasing.

"I don't want it now," Nora said, "I want it later."

"Your eyes are bigger than your stomach," Papa teased her again. He used to say this often and it always made us laugh. We pictured his words literally and it seemed funny.

We spent the whole afternoon lying under the shade of the trees, eating all the fruit we could. But when we left, Mother had made sure not one bit of fruit left the orchard with us.

Ben Hur had fallen asleep and Papa carried him until another carriage could be hailed to take us to our "hotel." How well we slept that night!

Two glorious weeks in Patras were now ending. The Susquehanna was really ready for us. Mother packed the little that we had unpacked. We said goodbye to a city in which we had spent two very happy weeks. We got into a very small rowboat that was to take us to the Susquehanna. My fright was lessened only because Mother and Papa were with us.

Ben Hur was bundled in the blanket that had brought him all the way from Marash. Papa said he felt sentimental toward that blanket.

It had kept the baby warm and maybe saved his life. We had discarded many items before we left for America, but Papa said he always wanted to keep that blanket. Now Ben Hur was wrapped in it again on the final lap of our journey to America.

As we approached the Susquehanna, it loomed larger and larger. People were stepping off the little boats and climbing up the ship by a ladder that was suspended from one of the decks. The ship seemed so high I was afraid I would not be able to climb it alone. Nora was ready to jump out of the boat and climb the ladder. Cynthia began to cry. She was always afraid of the water.

Papa suggested that Mother go up first, taking Ben Hur. Some men helped pull the row boat close to the ship to make it easier for Mother to reach the ladder. One of the men helped Mother up the ship and another one offered to take the baby. As Papa passed Ben Hur to the man, there was a sudden strong wind that moved the ladder. The man lost his balance and fell into the water—with Ben Hur!

We all screamed! Papa almost went overboard trying to save Ben Hur. He was barely able to grasp one corner of the blanket that was tied around Ben Hur.

Our screams had attracted the attention of people on board the ship as well as those coming towards the ship in their small boats.

As Papa pulled the blanket out of the water, we all held our breath. Yes, there was Ben Hur, still in the blanket.

We died a thousand deaths in the few seconds that had just passed! One of the other passengers, a man who had also escaped from Marash, said, "I wonder if God saved this child from the Turks only to give him to the sea."

I shuddered. Even Nora cried. Fortunately, Mother was climbing up the ladder and did not realize what had happened until she heard people screaming. By that time, Papa had rescued Ben Hur. Papa held onto the wet bundle until all of us children had been helped up the ladder to the ship. He then came up with Ben Hur, trusting no one else to do it.

When at last we were all on board ship, it seemed another milestone had been reached. There seemed to be so much

excitement and shouting. I wondered why every one seemed angry.

"Why are so many people angry?" I asked Mother.

"They are not angry," she replied. "They are the sailors and laborers giving and taking orders. Soon they'll pull up the anchor and we'll really start."

I did not know what an anchor was so Mother explained, saying we would soon see it.

We were settled in our "stateroom" before the ship sailed. It was not a small or private room at all.

"I don't like this place," I said to Mother. "There are too many people."

"Never mind," she said. "They are all nice people so we must be nice, too. These people have lost their homes just like us, so for a while we will all make the boat our home."

"Why can't we have our own room?" Nora asked.

"Where is Papa?" Cynthia wanted to know.

Mother had to explain that all the money we had was spent to buy our tickets and that we were lucky to just get on the boat even though we could not have our own rooms.

"Because we cannot have separate rooms, Papa has to sleep in another section of the boat for the men," she explained.

We could not understand why the men and the women had to be separated and asked if that's what they do in America.

"That's the custom everywhere," Mother explained. "If families cannot have their own rooms, the men have their dormitories and the women theirs."

I knew what a dormitory was because I had visited many friends of Mother's at the Girls' College in Marash. Somehow that seemed different. Here there were "upstairs" beds and "downstairs" beds.

"I want to sleep 'upstairs,'" Nora said.

Mother decided that Nora and Cynthia would sleep "upstairs" since it would be a little more difficult for Tirzah and me to climb "upstairs" to the bed.

After we had settled in our dormitory, Mother said we could all go on deck to find Papa and to watch the ship leave the harbor. Papa was waiting for us as soon as we went on deck. He had already

seen every section of the ship and wanted to show it to us. We went all around the deck and I peeked into some beautiful rooms.

"They're much better than ours," I said to Mother. "Why can't we have one of those rooms?"

"There are only a few of those rooms," Mother said. "Now try to count all the people on the ship. How can they all fit into the few nice rooms?" "Can't we take turns sleeping in the nice rooms?" I asked.

"I'm sure we will have our turns another time, on another ship," Mother promised.

We had a hard time keeping up with Papa. He walked so fast we often lost him but he would come back to find us—"just like when we were running from Marash," I thought. He always went ahead but came back to find us.

Soon the whistle blew and we all jumped.

Mother said, "Now let's go where we can see them pull up the anchor."

That seemed to take some time but I was absorbed in watching the anchor come out of the water. I was a little disappointed. I thought it was going to be something very huge, almost as huge as the ship. I wondered how such a small thing kept the ship from moving.

Mother and Papa gathered us near the rail so that we might watch the city we were leaving behind, the city that had given us two weeks of happiness and bliss, the city in which the sun had shone for us two full weeks. Handkerchiefs were being waved by the people on board ship and by the people on land. People were crying. I wondered why people always cried whenever they started to go anywhere and whenever they arrived anywhere. I watched Mother. Her eyes were filling up, too. I wondered why she was crying because we were not leaving anyone behind. We were all together.

Seeing Mother cry always made me cry, too. In fact, every time I saw anyone cry, I felt like crying, too, even if I did not know the people who were crying.

Papa put his arms around Mother.

"She said, "We are really going home," and I knew from the way she said it that it was a prayer.



CHAPTER 18

Susquehanna

Soon the people in the harbor looked smaller and smaller and the sun was setting, it seemed, in another world.

Before we went to bed Tirzah became very seasick again and I was so proud again that I was not seasick.

"I am afraid it is the food," Mother said, "but we'll get used to that also."

The food was not at all good. We had no fresh fruit and we missed that more than anything else. There was a store on board ship where fruit was sold.

Apples were selling for fifteen cents each. I did not know how much fifteen cents was but Mother said it was too expensive. She promised that we would buy apples for Tirzah's birthday. That's how we would celebrate her birthday which was on May 17, when we would still be crossing the ocean. But when May 17 came, Tirzah could not take part in her birthday party because she could not eat anything, not even fresh fruit.

After we settled into the routine of ship life, it was again time to explain to people why Tirzah and I had bandaged feet.

I just did not want to be within hearing distance when Papa began his explanations. The pain had not left me yet. Added to the physical pain was mental pain also.

"You should be thankful," Mother used to say to cheer us up, "that you will not even limp. Don't you remember the people in the hospital who had their feet or legs amputated? And some lost their ears."

I certainly did remember. I remembered the cries and the

moaning in the hospital rooms and hallways. I would never forget it. And somehow I could never forget the pain in my feet. Even when there was no pain I could not forget it.

There were other Marash refugees on board ship but they were all grownups. I don't think many children survived the six-day freezing march from Marash, or if they did, none was on board ship. There did not seem to be many other children either, so during the seventeen days we spent on the ship, we were mostly with Mother, asking questions, learning about ships, the ocean, America.

Papa always was surrounded by people, sometimes Marash people reviewing the events of the recent past. Often it was total strangers who were interested in his family, especially the outward signs of what two little girls had endured. Mother, although she was ill most of the time, made us feel the future was full of romance.

"You will be going to such wonderful schools," she would repeat. "And we will no longer lose our home. We will probably live in Schenectady."

That was a harder word than "Susquehanna." We could now say "Susquehanna" without any trouble. We soon learned to say "Schenectady" without any trouble. In fact, it became a game that amused us and helped us pass the time. We could even spell the name of the city.

"Why are we going to Schenectady?" we asked.

Mother explained that Papa was interested in science and that there was a very large organization there, the General Electric Company, where Papa hoped he might find work. A friend from Marash had lived in that city for some time and was going to try to find work for Papa. In fact, that friend was to meet us when we arrived in New York. If he did not, we might not be able to land. Someone had to "sponsor" us.

Now Mother had the job of explaining "sponsor." As usual, she was ready for that, too.

Mother said some day soon, in America, we would study Latin. Then we would learn so many new words in English, words that had been "borrowed" from "Latin," the language of the people of Latium or ancient Rome. When we learned Latin, we would be able

to know what "sponsor" meant because we would know it had come from a Latin word "spondere" to promise. Our "sponsor" would promise to be responsible for us. He would stand behind us to help us in case we were not able to get settled right away—just in case.

Mother assured us this would not be necessary in our case because, thanks to God, Papa was healthy and could find work. Mr. K would be our sponsor. He would meet us upon our arrival in New York to promise to the American immigration officials that he would take care of us, he would see that Papa found work and could support his family.

"But suppose..." we began.

Mother was ready for this, too. "It is a good sign when one can find sponsors," she answered our unfinished question. "It means that one is reliable, his friends know he is honest and not lazy. Mr. K knows that Papa will be able to find work, is not lazy, and will be able to take care of his family. Just by Mr. K's saying he will sponsor Papa, the immigration officers know that Papa will be a good citizen, otherwise Mr. K would not say so because if Papa did not turn out to be honest and reliable, it would cost Mr. K a great deal of money."

Mother added, "To be a sponsor also is a good sign. It shows that a person is unselfish, is thinking of the welfare of others."

We were glad to be reassured again that Papa was honest and reliable, glad that Mr. K was a good man. And I was sure I wanted to learn Latin. I also wanted to know what "immigration" meant, and what Mother meant by "borrowing" words. Mother's "classes" were never dismissed.

"America is full of people from other countries," Mother told us. She must have agreed with Socrates that "all wisdom begins with a question."

"America was settled by people from many countries, and each one brought not only himself but his customs and his language. His neighbors borrowed some of that language. Remember when the automobile came to Turkey? We called it 'automobile' because there was no Turkish word for it. Remember, in Turkey everybody called a

train '*chemin de fer*'? There was no word for 'train' because the Turks did not have trains until the French came to their country and built 'iron roads.'"

Mother told us, "I know from letters I received from friends in America that Americans have even borrowed Turkish and Armenian words. They are eating 'shish kebab' and 'pilav.'"

She added, "And if they ask as many questions as my children, they will know what 'shish' means, and what 'pilav' means."

"I wish we had some right now," I thought. I did not like the food on the ship but Mother had said we must not complain about it because if we did, it would make no difference. The food still would not be good, and we would not be good passengers either. We were getting what we had paid for and that is all we should expect.

"It is better than sitting at a table full of delicious food from which we had to run away," she reminded us.

Papa stopped by our "classroom." He was always walking around the deck. He seemed to have so much energy and people were always listening to him. "Another lesson?" he winked at Mother.

"Not in arithmetic," she replied.

"They can always learn that later," he replied and continued walking with the stranger who was with him. He was always picking up a passenger with whom to walk the deck.

Once a day, he would take Tirzah and me to walk with him.

"A little longer each day," he would say.

We were progressing. At first we walked only with bandages on our feet. After a week on board ship, we were walking in slippers without toes. It was a great occasion when we wore these slippers which covered the bottoms of our feet that were our "rehearsal" for the big day when we would wear real shoes "tomorrow"—the day we would reach New York. The slippers did not hurt. I thought that I walked so nonchalantly.

Tirzah could even run now but I realized my case was much worse. I had heard this said so many times. So, I thought I would try to run, too. I did.

I thought no one was looking but I heard Nora cry, "Look, Mother, Lydia is running!"

I thought Mother would reprove me but she was clapping her hands in approval. I ran toward her. She caught me in her arms, her eyes misty. Perhaps she was thinking of another time ten years ago when I had first walked or run. Perhaps I was beginning to "grow" again.

"Tonight you may wear your new shoes," she said "because tomorrow you will wear your best clothes and the shoes we bought in Constantinople for this great occasion."

"Will it hurt?" I asked.

"It shouldn't," she assured me, "because they will be large enough."

"How fortunate you are," Papa said. I realized suddenly that Papa had stopped with some of the other passengers to watch the phenomenon of my running.

"She almost died," he began, which was always Mother's cue to take me away.

"Lets go down and try the shoes," she said.

The men could not come down to our quarters, so Papa must have continued the story of my operation. My toes and feet were so sensitive to touch, that just looking at those leather shoes made me cringe, but Tirzah was already putting hers on. I must do the same. Mother helped me with mine, ever so tenderly. Yes, it did hurt.

"Each day it will hurt a little less," Mother said, trying to be cheerful, but always tears came to her eyes when she was trying to be brave and asking us to be brave.

"Look," Cynthia said, "Tirzah is going on deck."

But I did not want to go even if I could, even if my feet did not hurt, because I did not want to hear "that story" again.

I walked back and forth, at first holding onto the berths, then without any help. "Would you like to take them off now?" Mother asked.

"It will hurt to take them off," I said.

"I'll help you take them off whenever you want," Mother said. "I'll be right here when you need me. I am packing for tomorrow."

With misty eyes she began preparations for The Great Day — the Day we would reach Home. With misty eyes she helped me take

off my shoes when I said, "I think I better take them off. They might get scratched."

"Yes," she said, "you had better save them for tomorrow to wear with this blue dress I bought for you."

It hurt while taking them off but tomorrow, I thought, it won't hurt so much.



CHAPTER 19

America

Today was the tomorrow we had been waiting for. Today was the day we would arrive "Home." Today was the day we would see, at last, the "Mother of Exiles" the "mighty woman with a torch."

Yes, there she was! Mother had prepared us for our introduction to her. She was the symbol of great international friendship—a gift from the people of France to the people of the United States. From France who came to the aid of the forefathers of a liberty-loving people who had fought valiantly during the American Revolution. From the liberty-loving people of France who had joined many Americans in mourning the death of Abraham Lincoln. So deeply moved had they been that they had sent his widow a gold medal, with the message, "Tell Mrs. Lincoln that in this little box is the heart of France." From a people who had inscribed on the medal, "Dedicated by French democracy to Lincoln, twice-elected President of the United States—honest Lincoln who abolished slavery, reestablished the Union, and saved the Republic, without veiling the Statue of Liberty." It was among another liberty-loving people that an idea had been born—the idea of a gift, a Statue of Liberty, from another people who had also fought, not "for an interest, but for an idea."

And today was the day that we saw for the first time the lady with the silent lips, crying:

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...the homeless, tempest-tost to me..."

And today in the United States was also Decoration Day, or Memorial Day, May 30, a day set aside for decorating the graves of

soldiers who had lost their lives during the American Civil War for the cause of freedom. And here on May 30 we approached Bedloe's Island, saw the Great Statue of Liberty, who was there just for the purpose of receiving us—the "tempest-tost" children, who today, for the first time in three months would be able to wear shoes to cover wounded feet, feet that had carried also wounded hearts.

Yes, Tirzah and I were wearing shoes again. It was a significant day for two little girls. It was May 30. It was a holiday—we could not land today.

"Surely we can wait one more day," Mother said. "We are in a safe harbor in our New World."

From the ship, we could see "her beacon-hand glow..." Yes, we were in a safe haven. We could wait for another tomorrow.

It seemed strange to sleep on board ship tonight without the usual rock and roll. Was it the stillness that kept me awake? Or maybe it was the effects of my first day in shoes? It was hard to distinguish actual pain from past pain. Somehow I could always feel the bandages being yanked from raw bleeding sores.

Mother had watched me as I took off my shoes.

"It hurts," I said.

"Each day it will hurt less," she replied.

Somehow it seemed good to know that tomorrow it would hurt less. Tirzah said hers almost did not hurt. The only way in which I felt superior to Tirzah was that my operation was much worse and I had not been seasick at all. Tirzah had not been seasick today for the first time in about seventeen days. But, of course, today the *Susquehanna* had not moved at all. We had spent our first American holiday, Memorial Day, on board ship. Tomorrow we would leave the *Susquehanna* who had brought us safely home to our New World.

"To the sea-washed, sunset gates..." Mother was saying. "We will watch for a day from the deck this 'Sweet Land of liberty...this Land of the Pilgrim's pride'...this land which, tomorrow, will take from this ship some more liberty-loving pilgrims who more than self this, their new country, will love and mercy more than life, for they are coming from a land where mercy has been forgotten. Here on this ship are new pilgrims coming to join the children of pilgrims of

long ago who, more than life, their liberty loved."

Mother was reciting, it seemed to me, not only to her family but to the Statue of Liberty and as I followed the directions of her eyes, I expected the Statue of Liberty to open those silent lips and speak across the harbor to us.

We were ready to disembark. Papa was counting heads, clutching Ben Hur in his arms, calling roll. "Tirzah, Lydia, Cynthia, Nora, Mother. Yes, we are all here," he said, and quoting from the Psalms. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."

"Mr. K should be here any moment," Papa said. "He did not come yesterday, maybe, because it was a holiday. Today he will surely be here."

But Mr. K was nowhere to be seen.

"Maybe he could not get here from Schenectady," I said. I liked to say the word "Schenectady." I already knew how to spell it. I certainly wanted to be able to spell the name of the city that was to be our new home.

"You wait here," Papa said, giving Ben Hur to Mother. "I will find Mr. K."

As Father was transferring Ben Hur to Mother's arms, the ship's doctor came toward us. He exchanged pleasantries with Mother and Father. He and Papa had become good shipboard mates. Two little girls walking with bandaged feet had aroused the doctor's interest on that first day we embarked in Patras. Papa, of course, had told him the whole story. The doctor had offered his assistance, and unbandaged our feet. It had surprised me that the bandages no longer were stuck to raw sores, yet I found myself suffering in retrospect the excruciating pain which had begun with the first touch of the knife in a hospital room which seemed so far away and so long ago, yet only yesterday.

"We hope they can wear shoes when we reach America," Papa had said, adding, "They can walk even now without limping."

It seemed good to hear such reassuring words.

"Some day can I wear shoes with very high heels?" I had asked.

"By the time you are a young lady, you can not only wear high-heeled shoes but I am sure you can dance like a princess," the doctor added.

Just now I could not imagine wearing high heels. I had often worn high heels when we had played "house" in the days when we were children. Here I was, eleven years old, thinking of just five months ago when I was a child. What transitions those five months had wrought! But for the Grace of God, I might have had an icy grave. I might have lost both feet.

Just now I was walking, with shoes, not limping—but walking ever so gingerly. I found myself keeping my distance from everyone. It would hurt so much, I thought, if anyone stepped on my toes. I remembered how even normal feet hurt when someone stepped on them.

We were saying goodbye to the doctor, thanking him for his help during the crossing. Mother, too, had needed help. She had not been well. She had not quite recovered from the pneumonia she had contracted following the journey from Marash, only days after Ben Hur's birth.

"A good rest and good food is all you need to get well," Papa used to say to Mother almost every day.

I think we all lost weight on board ship because we ate so little. At first we had complained to Mother about the food but she said it was not polite to complain about such matters, so we had tried to be polite.

"You see a good doctor as soon as you are settled," the doctor said. "And, by the way, where do you expect to be settled?"

"In Schenectady, I think," Papa said, "if our sponsor comes. I'm afraid there has been a misunderstanding. He is not here yet. I thought he would come yesterday to see us and arrange all details so we could leave the ship promptly this morning. We cannot leave the ship until he comes."

"Maybe I can be of service," the doctor told Papa. "I am going ashore. Maybe I can find him for you?"

Papa gave Mr. K's address in Schenectady. The doctor said he would telephone him if necessary. He assured Papa that there would be nothing to worry about.

"You have learned to be patient," the doctor said, "and I am sure you have not lost faith in people in spite of your misfortunes. I'll be

back with your friend. In the meantime, if he comes, leave word for me here in my office as to where you will be while in New York."

Hours passed. Mr. K. did not come. We were busy watching the other passengers leaving the ship. It would be our turn soon. There were other distractions which passed the time. Some of the distractions were sad indeed. One of the passengers was talking to Mother.

"That poor family," she said. "Either they must all go back or send back one of the girls. She has trachoma!"

That dreaded word again.

"Apparently the doctors in Greece had not diagnosed it correctly," the woman said.

How dreadful it would be, I thought, if one of us had it. Mother would never let us be separated again. We would all go back. Back where? Surely not to Marash! The Turks would kill us. Had we run in vain? Lost all our possessions in vain? Suffered in vain?

"See," I heard Papa saying to Tirzah and me, "we are lucky that no one in our family has trachoma — just frostbitten feet that are not contagious." Mother was now crying, suffering with the heartbroken family that must decide to be separated or all go back.

We had spent Memorial Day on board ship because no one could disembark on a holiday, literally on the shores of America—our first holiday in America. We were anxious to debark but yet we were happy just waiting because we were safe and all together and Tirzah was not sick anymore because the ship was not moving. And at night we could see the bright lights of New York and the great, tall buildings with their thousands lights blinking, as if winking back at the stars.

But now it was May 31. There was no word from Mr. K.

"Don't worry," Papa said. "The doctor will either find him or will find some other way for us."

On June 1 we were still on board ship. Mr. K did not come. This time Papa looked discouraged, so it was Mother's turn to pick up where Papa left off, to cheer us up.

"Never mind," she said, "when God closes one door, he opens another." And indeed, there was the "other door" opening. It was not Mr. K. It was the ship's doctor.

Papa hurried toward the doctor with his usual smile.

"Did you find Mr. K, our sponsor?"

"I am your sponsor," the doctor said. "Come, are you all ready?"

We were indeed ready and did not even waste time to ask what had happened to Mr. K. or why was the doctor doing this for us. Mother had said God would open another door and here was the door and we were all ready to go through it.

The doctor led us to Ellis Island. The inspectors asked Papa and Mother to read from a slip of paper they picked at random from a box. All future citizens had to be able to read to enter the country. Papa and Mother read without difficulty, of course.

"I can read too," Tirzah said.

The inspector smiled and gave her a slip to read.

"I can read, too," I added.

"I can too," Cynthia joined in.

The inspector, a little surprised, entered, in the spirit of fun, I am sure, this game we children wanted to play and he let us all read.

"My goodness," he said, "how is it they all can read?"

"We taught them all," Papa said, "because we knew some day we would come to America."

"They think I can't read yet," Nora insisted, "but I can. I finished the first grade."

The inspector handed her a slip of paper, somehow sure that Nora, certainly would be too young to read in any language. She was six years old, and in one week, on June 7 would be seven. She would be the first one to have a birthday in America. We were certainly going to celebrate that occasion!

Nora was reading-on the inspector's lap. He was saying, "Where did you get those big black eyes?"

"They came with me," she said, as she had many times before to the same question.

The reading lessons were over. We had landed. We had been on Ellis Island only twenty minutes. No one in the family had trachoma! We were lucky, indeed, even though we waited two days on board ship for our sponsor to come. But they were happy days because somehow we knew God would be our sponsor as He had always been through fire and snow storms.

On the way out of Ellis Island, Papa said, "Everyone must be hungry. Let us eat at that restaurant," pointing to a restaurant in the Immigration Building we were leaving. There were signs all over the restaurant, inviting customers to try their "apple pie."

"What is apple pie?" I asked Mother.

"Pastry with apples," Mother said.

I knew she would know what it was, as usual,

"Let us all have some," Papa said.

So we all ordered apple pie, the first thing we ate in America.

Then we took a ferry boat toward New York City. It was like the ones that we used in Constantinople to cross the Bosphorous to Scutari. Except this time we all got off in New York City.

We were home in America.

Papa telephoned someone. When he returned, he said we were to take a taxi to a hotel.

"Let us walk for a while before we take the taxi," Mother said.

Papa arranged to have our luggage sent to the hotel. There wasn't much luggage since we had left everything behind.

"We will come later," he told the driver who must have wondered why.

So we walked, Papa carrying Ben Hur, who was just four months old, Mother holding onto Cynthia and me. I still felt like a little child walking in shoes that I had not worn, it seemed, for ages. Tirzah was walking as if she had never stopped walking. Nora was skipping ahead of us, Papa calling, "Don't go too far, you'll get lost." Cynthia was holding Mother's other hand, as she always did.

There was so much to see. If we had not lived in Constantinople for a while, there would have been more to surprise us. We had ridden in streetcars, trains, automobiles, and boats, so it was only the elevated trains that were new to us. As we walked, we looked at people, at the tall buildings, and listened to the noise of the city.

Suddenly I jumped and hugged Mother. I was frightened.

"There must be Turks here," I said. "I heard a shot."

"Don't ever be afraid of shots or Turks again," Mother said. "That was the tire from an automobile. I heard it, too, and it did sound like a gun."

Reassured, I loosened my hold on Mother and continued to walk. We just followed Papa wherever inclination took him. It was always hard to follow him as it seemed he never walked but always ran.

"Not so fast, Aram," Mother kept saying, as she always had. "The children will get tired."

"I'm not tired," Nora said and skipped back from ahead of us. "I can walk wherever we are going."

I remembered that I certainly could walk also. I had walked for six days and almost six nights in a world that seemed thousands of miles away and thousands of years ago. Was I tired or were my feet hurting? Tirzah was walking ahead as if she had never ever stopped walking.

I was thinking up excuses for wanting to stop. No, I was going to keep up with the others. I was not going to stop. But suddenly I stopped. I forgot all about my feet. I thought I was seeing an apparition.

"Lydia," Mother was saying, "if your feet hurt, we'll stop walking and take a taxi to the hotel now."

"No, no," I said, "I can walk. I just wanted to look at that woman again. She is black."

"Oh, dear, I thought I had prepared you for everything but I completely forgot to tell you about this," Mother said.

I had seen many Algerian soldiers on our exodus from Marash. I had seen them alive. I had seen them dead. I had walked on their naked bodies where they had fallen dead, frozen stiff. But they had not seemed so black. Maybe I was too dazed at the time I saw them because somehow nothing I saw then had shocked me.

But now I saw this black woman, and there were others like her walking all along the streets, and nobody seemed to pay any attention to them.

Mother said, "They are just like everyone else, just like you and me but they're black. That's the only difference."

"But their lips are hanging," Nora said.

"But they have beautiful, white teeth," Mother said.

And now I could see black women, black men, even black children and yes they all seemed to have beautiful white teeth. I had

already seen the most startling thing about America, the only thing Mother had forgotten to tell us.

"I wonder why I never thought of telling them about it," Mother said to Papa.

We walked a little more and now everywhere I could see black people walking and talking with the white people, but I was no longer surprised. Now I could even pass one by without staring. I think this was the beginning of my Americanization.

"Shall we take a taxi now or try the elevated trains?" Papa asked, knowing full well that his children would choose something they had never tried before.

"Do you know how to get to the hotel by elevated train?" Mother asked. "We'll ask a policeman," Papa said.

"How wonderful it is to be able to walk to a policeman for help instead of hiding from one for fear that he will harm us," Mother said.

We had known only Turkish gendarmes who were on duty not to help, but to hinder and persecute Armenians. But this was America and policemen were friends.

Papa showed him the slip of paper on which he had written the address of the hotel. When he gave directions, Mother said, "I think he is Irish." This was the second time I had heard of the Irish.

We climbed to the station platform to take the elevated train.

"Look at the city and the people from here," Mother told us. "Everyone is hurrying to go to their homes. Yes, even we are going home."

The hotel was owned by an Armenian. We lived there for about three weeks. It had a restaurant where we could get the Armenian dishes that we had missed so much while on board ship. One of the waitresses, a beautiful blonde woman, was the proprietor's wife

"What a beautiful lady," Papa said.

I had not yet heard the saying that gentlemen preferred blondes. But here was Papa, admiring the first blonde he had met in America. Although he had seen many blondes in Turkey among the American faculty members and missionaries, this lady was the first one here in America."

"My wife is Irish," the proprietor told Papa.

"A beautiful woman," Papa said.

"And she can speak Armenian quite well," her proud husband added. "When you order, have her repeat your order."

So we ordered pilav and dolma and karnu yarak. The blonde lady could say them well but when she said "karnu yarak" we could tell she was not Armenian. I loved the way she would say karnu yarak, so during our stay at the hotel, I ordered karnu yarak (eggplant stuffed with hamburger and onions and cooked casserole-style with tomato sauce). It was one of my favorite dishes but I also wanted to hear the beautiful lady repeat it.

We had two rooms and a bath in this hotel. We did not like it very much. There was no yard in which we could play. Mother did not want us to go out on the streets alone because she was afraid we might get lost.

Papa seemed to be away most of the time. He was being invited constantly by different Armenian groups to speak on what had transpired during "The Marash Incident." People were always coming to the hotel to see us, to ask questions about the massacre. Many New York people had relatives who had suffered and died there. Everyone wanted to see Ben Hur, the miracle child who had lived on snow from the time he was nine days old until he was fifteen days old and had lived.

Yes, we were the only family who had escaped with all its members still alive. Others had lost at least one member en route and left dear ones in icy graves.

Mother could not accept all the invitations but Papa always went. Several times Mother stayed in bed all day and the doctor used to come quite often. Occasionally after the doctor left, I could see a tear or two leave Mother's face. Her tears were so contagious that as soon as she wept, I did. But I could not understand why the doctor began to come almost every day.

When we asked questions, Mother said she was just so weak that she would have to rest. But she promised that on Nora's birthday, June 7, she would get up and we would celebrate. We would buy a doll for Nora, as she had promised while we were on board ship. We

all looked forward to Nora's forthcoming birthday.

Right after breakfast on June 7, we left the hotel for a stroll. We looked at the shop windows. We chose, through the window, several dolls we liked best.

"Nora may make the decision," Mother said. "It is her birthday."

"I like that one." Nora pointed at a kewpee doll on display in a window. We all went in the store. Mother asked the price of the doll.

"Seven dollars," the clerk replied.

Seven dollars meant nothing to us. We had no idea about monetary value of American money.

Mother looked at Papa.

"We will buy it," he said bravely.

Nora seemed very happy. But after we left the store, Mother told Nora that she would have to take very good care of her doll so that it would not break.

"Seven dollars in our present condition is too much for a doll," Mother admonished us all, "but it represents not only the purchase price of a doll for Nora's birthday, it is also the beginning of a happy year for us all. So it is well worth it. And now, Nora, you may name it."

Before Nora had a chance to say a word, many suggestions came from us all. "Let's call it Pierre," I urged. Pierre was my favorite playmate when we were in Marash. He was a beautiful, blonde boy who was my age. Before the 1920 massacre, whenever we went to Marash we used to rent part of the large, beautiful house that Pierre's grandfather owned. Pierre and his parents and his younger sister, Alice, used to live in another section of the same house. Both families shared a beautiful, white marble veranda.

The mental picture I have retained of this home has been for me like a scene from *The Arabian Nights*. On the outskirts of the city where this house was located, we could see, from the marble walls high on a hill, the city below, with its minarets, like skyscrapers, trying to reach the sky.

The thought of Pierre took me back many years, if there could be many years to a child of eleven. And while I was thinking of him, I

was walking on the sidewalks of New York, not on the paths of the freezing, white, mountain paths where Pierre and his sister, Alice, had frozen to death.

Only the noise from a passing car that sounded like a shot awakened me from my reverie, and I remembered that we were suggesting names for Nora's doll.

"But Pierre is a boy's name," Tirzah said, "and this doll is a girl."

"It looks like a boy to me," I replied. "It has no hair."

"I think it is a girl, too," Cynthia joined in. "It has a dress on."

"Then let's name it Alice," I said, "after Pierre's sister."

"Poor Pierre and Alice," Mother said, with tears in her eyes and voice.

"Their poor, poor parents," Papa added. "How lucky we are that we are all here, everyone of us."

"We must remember them in some way," Mother said. "Every time we thank God for our good fortune, we will think of them. And that will be every day of our lives."

Impatient with us all, Nora blurted out, "This is my doll and I am going to call it Koorken."

"But Koorken is a boy's name, too," Tirzah told her.

"I think he is a boy," Nora said, "and I want Koorken for his name."

We all knew why Nora wanted to name her doll Koorken.

Koorken was a boy in her class in Marash whom the teacher had said was the naughtiest in the class—next to Nora. Nora, therefore, had a warm spot in her heart for him. He always helped her in and out of scrapes and had shared the pinpricks the teacher inflicted on them.

So, now, to our family of seven had been added Koorken. That evening when we ate at our hotel restaurant, Koorken sat at the table with us. He, too, ordered karnu yarak, just so he could hear the proprietor's wife, our favorite waitress, repeat it.

Our three weeks in New York went by so fast. Whenever mother felt a little better, we visited someone. One day we had an invitation to visit Mrs. Nute and Minor Rogers. It seemed everyone from the Old World was now in this New World. Mr. Nute was still in Turkey,

but Nute and his mother were living in New York. Mrs. Nute had brought Minor to this country so he could go to school. She would join Dr. Nute after she had placed Minor in an American one.

It seemed such a long ride by streetcar to the Nutes, but whenever we were all together, we had no fears and even the long rides became enjoyable. Minor seemed grown up. He did not even seem to remember us, but Mother and Papa and Mrs. Nute seemed to enjoy their reunion, even though some tears were shed as they reminisced and as Mrs. Nute listened to an account of what had befallen us. Papa, as usual, added a note of cheer by repeating some of the happy incidents that Mrs. Nute and Mother and he had shared in happier days in Tarsus.

It was during this visit that I learned for the first time that Mother and Papa had decided to go to Boston instead of to Schenectady. I was listening very intently instead of going out to play. Playing with Minor would never be the same, I thought. Although we were about the same age, he seemed much bigger, not only physically. He just seemed so much more grown up, so I stayed in the house, pretending to play with Ben Hur. But I wanted to hear why we were not going to Schenectady. I had thought of Schenectady as our home. I had even made a mental picture of what our house would look like.

Now I would have to think of Boston. I remembered Grandma had gone to Boston. I wondered if that was why we were going to Boston. Uncle Herant-Fred in America—would be there also. I knew that Uncle Stephen, Mother's older brother, had died. Mother had cried for many days when the news had come.

"We decided last night," Papa was saying to Mrs. Nute. "The Armenian Church in Boston needs a pastor. A committee was sent to see me, to offer me the pastorate."

"This may be one way we can show our gratitude to God," Mother added, "for bringing our whole family safe and well to a home in America."

"There will be many occasions that I, as a minister, can help others in their hour of need," Papa said.

"So now," I thought, "we will be minister's children."

Papa had studied theology at the seminary in Marash and had preached in Mersin for a short time, but he had never been ordained. Now he could be a minister and would be ordained later.

I did not know what "ordained" meant but made a mental note to look it up when I found a dictionary. There was no dictionary in the hotel but I was sure that as soon as we had a home- in Boston-Papa would get us a dictionary.

Our next family visit was to Hoboken, New Jersey. We took a ferryboat and when we got off the boat, an Armenian man met us at the dock. Hoboken seemed to be high on a hill. Our Armenian friends had a nice house. We spent a full day with them, but when Papa began again to relate our exodus from Marash, I left the room.

"I want to play outside," I said.

Mother seemed always to understand.

I liked it best when we did not go to visit anyone, when we just went by ourselves to see different places in New York. I liked best the day we spent visiting the Woolworth Building. We had lunch on the twentieth floor. We could see the whole city, it seemed, and there were no friends to whom Papa could talk about Marash and, especially, about me and my operations.

One morning, after breakfast at our hotel, when the proprietor came to our table as he always did, I heard Papa say to the proprietor, "Well, tomorrow we will leave for Boston. Thank you for your considerations and hospitality." Then they talked in Armenian which I could not understand.

As we left the hotel for the railroad station, Mother was again deluged with questions.

What time will we arrive in Boston? Why are we going to Boston? How far is it to Boston?

Mother was reaping the harvest she had sown in encouraging us to ask questions. She had taught us, through Kipling, to "keep six honest serving-men."

I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I know);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who

Once more we were all on a train, but this time there were no French soldiers offering us wine and as we looked out the window there was no white wilderness with men, women, and children trudging through the snow, or lying, frozen dead. Tirzah and I were wearing shoes, Ben Hur was not bundled up but now four months old and happily gurgling. This time we were not running away from Turks. Now we were on our way to start a new life. We were going home.



CHAPTER 20

Boston

At South Station [Boston] we were met by Mr. G. to whose home we were to go until we could find a house. The G's lived in Newton, a suburb of Boston. A member of the Pastoral Committee of the Cilician Armenian Congregational Church, he had offered to have the new minister and his family come to his home until a house could be found for us. He had a big house with many bedrooms. He had a daughter named Nora who worked in an office.

His two sons were going to college, and they had just returned home for the summer. One of the sons was a football hero at Brown University. His parents were very proud of him. What a football hero was I could not quite understand but he looked like a hero. He was tall, dark, and handsome and we thought it was very nice of him to smile at us even though he was a college boy and we were just little children running through his house and climbing the trees in his backyard.

It seemed utter joy to us to confuse everyone by always calling Nora. We had never known another Nora except our Nora. Our Nora could generally be found on the cherry tree in the back yard. The other Nora found it necessary to be in the kitchen most of the time helping her mother feed the gang.

It seemed the G's had guests all the time. Generally, the conversation began with congratulating them for their football hero but soon Papa had the floor, relating our flight from Marash. Many of the guests had relatives or friends about whose fate they were concerned.

Papa was a great raconteur. Even I sat spellbound listening to

him, but when he reached the chapter on me, how I nearly froze to death, and my operations, I used to squirm and sneak out of the room. I still suffered in retrospect. In the evenings I could feign sleepiness and go to bed but when this happened during the day, I joined Nora on the cherry tree. It seemed such a wonderful refuge, especially while the fruit lasted.

Shortly after our arrival in Newton, there were days when Mother spent the whole day in bed. She coughed frequently. Papa was concerned that she was not recovering rapidly enough from her pneumonia. One day the doctor came. He said she had a bad case of bronchitis. She urged Papa to find a house as soon as possible. She felt we were too big a family to impose on friends for more two weeks.

The G's were most hospitable but in addition to having us, they were having guests by the dozen every day. Many came out of curiosity as well as to hear news of relatives.

Ben Hur was always on display. "Is this the baby," they would say, "who was fed nothing but snow for six days?"

He looked so healthy and happy it seemed hard to believe. Whenever Mother was not able to get up for the day, Ben Hur became Tirzah's charge.

Papa would line us up. "This, my oldest, is Tirzah. Then comes Lydia. Then comes Cynthia. Then comes Nora. And this is my son, Ben Hur."

This was my cue. I knew the story of the flight would now begin and I would make my exit with the least pretext for an excuse. If it was too dark to go out to play or climb the cherry tree, there was always bed. Whenever Mother was too ill to come down, I would go to her room. She always seemed to know why I left the guests. Often the ladies would go to her room. The conversation here was not the same as downstairs. Mother listened while the ladies told her about finding a house, furnishings, and shopping. This interested me more and seemed much less gruesome.

About the first of July we moved to a house about ten minutes' walk from the G's. It was in Brighton just across from the boundary line. It was a furnished house which we could rent for two months

while the owners were away for the summer.

Soon after we moved, Mother's condition seemed to get worse. She had to be in bed most of the time.

"You will have to be the little mother," she said to Tirzah.

"You will make a good housekeeper," she said to me.

Cynthia and Nora were general helpers. Mother would get up for a while every day to see how much she could do, but Papa would insist on her resting. He was such a good cook himself that he didn't mind doing the shopping.

"I think you really enjoy shopping," Mother would tell him, "but even our big family cannot eat all that food."

"Never mind," Papa would say, "we might have guests." And we always did.

There was a player piano in the house which kept us amused but we could not find any music on the "rollers" with which we were familiar.

[The "rollers" were wide reels of special paper perforated with elongated holes, each of which actuated a particular piano key. The person "playing" the piano simply pumped foot pedals that moved the reel and forced air through the perforations, moving the piano keys and automatically creating elaborate piano renditions. BHB]

"Peggy O'Neil" became our favorite. Sometimes Mother would really play the piano for us.

"As soon as we move into our own house, we must get a piano," she would tell Papa. "The children must take lessons as soon as possible. They have lost so much time."

There was a daily inspection of the furniture.

"Because it does not belong to us," Mother said, "we must be doubly careful. These people must be very good people to rent a house to strangers with five young children."

"Either they are good or our money is good," Papa would say. "It is very expensive."

"Aram, you are a minister now, remember!" Mother would say with a twinkle in her eyes. "You should be thankful. We should all be thankful for this furnished apartment which we are to have for two months."

"Next week Mr. R. is going to help us find a house for September," Papa said. "I hope we can settle before the children start school."

But when next week came, Mother was so ill that looking for a house was put aside. The doctor came again and said he would arrange for an X-ray.

"What is an X-ray?" we all wanted to know.

Papa tried to explain as calmly as he could. In a few days a friend came to drive Mother to the hospital for an X-ray.

Ben Hur had four sad sisters baby sitting while Mother and Papa were away. It seemed such a long day. Tirzah prepared lunch while I took Ben Hur out in his carriage. It really was not his. This was included in the furnished house. There even was a crib for him. I would take him around the block and stop to see if Mother was back. Then I would take him around the block again ad infinitum. The only happy note was when a neighbor stopped to look in the carriage and said, "What a lovely baby."

When Mother and Papa returned, she answered our anxious silence.

"We will know in a few days."

In a few days the doctor came and there was a conference behind closed doors. While Papa walked to the door with the doctor, we rushed into Mother's room. She tried to hold back her tears to make room for ours.

When Papa joined us he said, "It is a good thing the children are grown up. Tirzah will have to be the little mother until Mother comes back from the hospital."

"How can I leave them?" Mother asked. "They are still so young in a land that is still strange to them."

"As soon as they go to school, it will no longer be strange," Papa said.

"Who will take care of Ben Hur when they are in school?" Mother cried. "It is so hard to be brave now."

"Even in this dark hour," Papa said, "we must be thankful that you will be in a hospital in a wonderful country, with your family near, with no danger of enemies..."

"Except an enemy in another form," Mother added.

I had never seen Mother more discouraged.

"Oh, God, don't leave them motherless," she prayed that night.

Ben Hur, only four months old now, was cooing and gurgling in his crib in contrast to the sad state of the rest of the family. We took him out of the crib and brought him to Mother.

"I can't even kiss him," she cried as she pressed him close to her.

Emerging from the depths of despair, she soon became composed and got out of bed, calmly to prepare us and herself for her departure to the hospital the next day. She prepared a chart with a column listing each one's duties.

After supper, with which we all helped like little angels, Mother put her dishes aside and would not let us wash them. She boiled them and washed them and put them aside. She calmly explained the nature of her illness. She told us why it would be best to kiss her on the forehead from now on. She assured us that the wonderful doctors and hospitals in this country would some day cure her.

After our evening chores were done we went to the living room. Papa suggested that we sing hymns and join in a family prayer. Mother played and we sang whatever hymns she selected. She knew them all it seemed — "The Rock That is Higher than I," "Trusting Jesus," "His Eye is On the Sparrow," "Safely Through Another Week," "Just When I need Him Most," "How Firm A Foundation."

The door bell rang. A few close friends came to offer words of encouragement. Their pathetic attempts to comfort and cheer us all seemed to add to Mother's fortitude. She invited them to join us in our family services. She took Ben Hur in her arms and asked me to play the hymns. I could not play well at all but Papa insisted because in the last few days he had heard me trying to play. I said I could play just the ones without flats or sharps. This did not give me much choice. Papa leafed through the hymn book and found, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds." I struggled through one verse and stopped. Papa said we would sing the other verses also.

I said, "I don't know how to play the other verses." This caused some laughter.

Mother said, "Just play the other verses the same way you did the first one."

I think the guests thought I was being funny but it had never occurred to me that all the verses we heard were played the same way. This was a new discovery for me.

Cynthia could sing "America" well. They insisted I play that.

"That has one flat," I said.

"Never mind, try it," Papa insisted.

I tried it. Papa's hearty baritone drowned out all my mistakes.

Ben Hur had fallen sleep. Mother went to put him in his bed. It seemed she was gone a long time. Everyone seemed to sense the reason. When she returned, outwardly calm but with wet eyes, Papa said he would read a few passages from the Bible after which maybe the children should go to bed. Mother asked him to read the twenty-third Psalm. He also read Psalms 46 and 121 and after a very touching prayer, we went to bed. Mother came to tuck us in and kissed us good night—on the forehead.

I think we all must have had the same dream that night—we dreamed that we were dreaming, that Mother really was not ill and did not have to go to the hospital. But morning came with all its reality. Mother ate breakfast with us, washed and boiled her dishes, gave us last-minute advice. We all went out to the car with her.

"I won't be far," she said. "You can visit me in the hospital I am sure."

She was going to a hospital in Boston but we were told no one under twelve was allowed to visit. That meant only Tirzah could see her.

"We will find a way," Papa said.

This gave us some hope because Papa always managed to find a way. As the car drove off, we waved with brave hands but broken hearts.

I think we had all steeled ourselves silently against this moment of parting.



CHAPTER 21

Little Mothers

As if with rehearsed precision, we marched toward the chart in the kitchen. There was no need to be asked to do this or that. "In your tender years you will learn the comfort of keeping busy," Mother had said when she was making out a chart for each of us.

Nora always wanted to go out to play, so to her recreation program had been added her major duty-taking out the garbage. She didn't seem to mind this as long as the garbage was ready when she was. It took a few days to train her to collect the garbage and take it out to the container in the back yard.

Cynthia was to help with the dishes and shopping. Papa did the major portion of the shopping but Cynthia was to do it when we ran out of an item or two now and then. This was not a difficult task because there were two stores just around the corner.

I was head housekeeper and second mate to Tirzah.

Tirzah was the general manager. Ben Hur was her major responsibility but we were to help her. She was also head cook.

We all helped with Ben Hur's bath. That was the main event of the morning. After the beds were all made and the breakfast dishes cleared, I took Ben Hur out in the carriage, Cynthia and Nora generally following me. This gave Tirzah a chance to do some cooking. Often Cynthia stayed to help her. This seemed a fine plan because if Tirzah needed anything from the store, Cynthia would be at hand to do the errand.

The first time Cynthia was asked to go to the store, she did not come back in a reasonable time. When she returned, she had neither

of the two items.

"Where are they?" Tirzah asked.

"They didn't have any."

"What about the other thing?"

"They didn't have any of that, either," Cynthia said.

"Did you try the other store?"

"They didn't have any, either."

I went to the store and did the shopping.

The next time Cynthia was asked to go to the store, she came back saying the store was closed.

Papa returned in time for supper. He was heavily laden, literally and figuratively. He must have shopped so that his visible burdens would cover up the invisible ones. He must have remembered Mother saying, "Don't forget that they are still children." He had brought home ice cream, cake, and a new toy for Ben Hur. He promised we could go shopping with him to buy the things we wanted.

After supper we had guests. They had come to see what they could do for us. Shouldn't Papa have a housekeeper? Who was to do the cooking? Who was to take care of the baby? Papa said until school opened we could manage. The ladies came to the kitchen but seemed disappointed not to find the sink full of dishes. Ben Hur was sleeping like an angel in his crib. They looked him over, asked us how old we were, in which grade we were in school.

Two of the ladies asked Papa if they might take us to Boston to shop. "Schools will open in a few weeks," they said. "The children will need clothes."

Papa thanked them and it was planned that in a few days they would take us downtown to buy school clothes.

Papa was to begin his ministry about the last week in August and was anxious to find a house before then. The people who had sublet the first floor apartment to us would return on the first of September.

Friends were all looking for a house, but I think they had their doubts of being successful when they looked at five young ones without a mother. Who would rent a house to us? After adding to

the problems and worries that had not occurred to Papa, they left us with the promise to come in a day or so to take us to the big city for our shopping spree.

Our first night without Mother was a sad one. Even Ben seemed to sense something was wrong. He cried all night. Papa walked back and forth with him in his arms practically all night. We were afraid that Ben was ill because he generally slept well and had not had a bad night like this before.

"What did you feed him?" Papa asked.

"The same thing," Tirzah said. "Mellon's food."

Ben Hur had never learned to use a bottle so we could not tuck him to bed with one. As soon as he left the hospital in Marash he had been fed whenever Elmas had thought to feed him with snow. Later it had been difficult to make him take the bottle. He had responded to the spoon and cup even before he was a month old. Now that seemed to be a handicap. When he cried at night, we had to pick him up and feed him or rock him to sleep. Sleep did not come easily the first night without Mother. Even Nora who generally slept very well because she always played very well joined us sitting up all night trying to amuse the baby.

By morning we were all exhausted. Even Ben Hur went to sleep.

Nora wanted to swap duties. Cynthia did not like this too well either. Papa said we should stick to the chart for the present. Changes might be made later.

One day Cynthia came back from the store, crying. She had not even had a chance to go to the store. A boy in the neighborhood had teased her. Nora volunteered to go. She said she could knock off his block. Papa wanted to know what a block was. Nora was learning slang faster than the rest of us. Nora did go to the store and came back successfully and triumphantly. She had "knocked off his block."

Nora was seven and Cynthia nine.

Papa asked Cynthia, "Why couldn't you knock off his block?"

"It is not ladylike," she said.

Nora was getting to be a tartar in the neighborhood. She could chase the boys. No one dared to tease her. She had already learned

to sing "Sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me." Often she accompanied Cynthia to the store as bodyguard. Cynthia was never successful as errand girl to the store. Papa was beginning to think we might have to start making changes on the chart.

Papa went to the hospital every day to see Mother. He took a daily report from us and brought back questions. Mother wanted to know if the chart was working all right. We all looked at Cynthia who insisted that it should be changed. Papa said Tirzah and Cynthia could go to the hospital with him the next day and they could discuss the changes.

I had charge of Ben Hur while they went. Nora was always outside. She promised to come back periodically to see if she was needed. We were anxious to have Tirzah and Cynthia return from the hospital. Papa had managed to get Cynthia in. Nora and I could go the next time—only two could visit at one time. Papa could always go in as a minister. I was tall enough to pass for twelve and if Cynthia got in Papa was sure Nora could also. We didn't know what Papa said to the nurse at the desk but we had no trouble getting in.

The only negative report Mother heard was Cynthia's failure to shop. Mother asked Cynthia why she did not like to shop. After much questioning she let the cat out of the bag. She said it was not ladylike to shop. She was ashamed to go in the store. Mother laughed heartily.

"She still thinks we are well-to-do people in the old country. This is America, dear," she said. "It is all right for little girls and ladies to go shopping."

"Nora likes to go shopping. Let her," Cynthia teased.

"You must not shirk your duty," Mother said. "You must learn to like it."

Tirzah and I could not visit at the same time because one of us had to be home with the baby. Generally Cynthia went with Tirzah and Nora with me. During one of our visits, Mother suggested that we play "store" and let Cynthia come to shop until she got used to the idea.

"Who will take care of Ben Hur when the girls go to school?"

Mother was concerned. "Do you think one of the ladies from the church will offer to take care of him?"

There were two Armenian families in the neighborhood but we did not know yet where our permanent home would be. Papa was still looking for a house. It was August now and the family who had sublet their house would be coming back on September 1.

"Mr. R. is coming tomorrow to help me find a house," Papa said. "We will think about the baby after we get settled."

In the evening a few ladies from the Aid Society came to see how we were getting along.

"I must find a house soon," Papa told the ladies.

"Five young ones," one of the ladies said, shaking her head. "It will not be easy, especially if they know they have no mother."

"We do, too, have a mother!" Cynthia said, "Only she is in the hospital."

We were all sensitive about this. We did not want people to think we did not have a mother. Cynthia had spoken for us all.

I think Papa understood the significance of this incident and in his inimitable way turned the subject to a humorous joke. He told the story of Nasratin Ghoja, a character in Turkish lore, who always got himself out of predicaments.

"I will have to do what Nasratin Ghoja said when he had trouble finding a house because he had so many children," Papa began.

We were eager to hear the story. So Papa told it.

"Everywhere he went, the landlord asked if he had any children. The poor man could not find a house. Finally, he told his children to take a walk through the cemetery while he and his wife went house hunting. As usual, the landlords asked, 'Have you any children?' 'Ah, yes,' Nasratin Ghoja said, sadly. 'But they are all in the cemetery, God bless their souls.' The next day Nasratin Ghoja and his family moved to their newly rented house. The landlord, watching his new tenants moving in, was surprised and puzzled to see so many children. When evening came and none of the children seemed to be going away, the landlord called on Nasratin Ghoja.

"Didn't I see at least half a dozen children move in?"

"Yes, indeed," smiled Nasratin Ghoja.

"But you told me your children were all dead!" the landlord bellowed.

"You must have misunderstood me," said Nasratin Ghoja calmly. "I said they were in the cemetery, and that is exactly where they were!" said Nasratin Ghoja.

This put us all in a good humor again, and while Papa was entertaining the guests with his endless stories, we returned to our evening chores. I was afraid Papa would ask me to play the piano—not the player—so I went to bed.

We were all excited in the morning. Papa was going to look at a house. When he returned we bombarded him with questions.

Yes, he had found a house, but not what he wanted.

"But, we have to take what we can get, and be thankful," he said.

"Did you tell the Nasratin Ghoja story?" we wanted to know.

"If I had, maybe we could find a better house," he said.

"Remember, the story is only a story. People don't really lie."

The house was on Brackett Street just around the corner where we lived. Moving was easy because we did not have any furniture yet.

When we visited Mother she was happy to know that we would be settled before schools opened. She wished she could select the furniture but that was impossible. Papa said Mrs. S. would go shopping with him. Mother's only injunction was that Papa get comfortable beds and a piano.

About a week before the end of the month we moved. Mr. P., the man who had sublet the house, came to check it over before we moved out. Papa went through every room with him. In the kitchen Papa showed him a dish we had broken. Mr. P. was very concerned over this dish.

"It was a family heirloom," he said.

"I am very sorry," Papa said. "They are children you know, but I will pay you whatever you think is fair."

Mr. P. thought it over for a few seconds and said, "Fifteen dollars."

Papa did not question his fee and paid him. I think Mr. P. wished we had broken more dishes.

Two ladies from the church came to help us clean the house

before we left. Papa showed them the broken dish for which he had paid fifteen dollars.

"I bet it came from the five-and-ten," the ladies said almost in unison.

"Never mind," Papa said. "The children must learn to be careful."

It was the only thing we had damaged in almost two months.

The furniture and we arrived at 36 Brackett Street at the same time. The only item we were excited about was the piano. Papa had bought a player piano! Our excitement soon died because he had forgotten to buy rollers. He promised he would get that as soon as he had talked with Mother. We insisted that he get "Peggy O'Neil."

We had double beds in Mr. P's house but Papa had bought single beds for all of us.

"I suppose I have to make all the beds," I said.

"Cynthia can help you after she does the shopping," Papa said with a twinkle in his eyes.

Tirzah was anxious to try the stove. She tried to light it but there was no flame. Papa tried it but he was unsuccessful. We all gathered around the gas range.

"Mrs. S. said she would see that the gas and electric company were notified to connect it," Papa said. The electricity was on but we were puzzled about the gas.

Mrs. S. lived on the second floor of the three-decker house into which we had moved. Papa went to tell her the stove would not work. She came down to explain that there was a meter in the bathroom and we would have to drop in a quarter. This worked like magic and Cynthia offered to take this job as her task, if she could be relieved of her shopping duties. Papa said she could do both and that it would be her job to see that there was always a quarter in the house for this purpose. We would cure Cynthia of her antipathy for shopping yet.

Papa had forgotten all about cooking utensils, so he and Tirzah and Cynthia went to a hardware store in Oak Square. Nora and I took the baby to the small back yard where Nora would have to take the garbage. There was also a place for a clothes line. There was a small back porch where we could play store for Cynthia's benefit.

The pantry window faced the porch which would make it easy to lug out the items for our store.

When the beds were set up, we had to decide who would sleep where. Papa put Ben Hur's crib in his room and said he would look after him if he cried at night because we would be going to school soon and needed uninterrupted sleep.

On each side of this house there was just a narrow strip of land. When we looked out the bedroom windows all we could see was a high fence, hiding from our view the best and only single house on the street. The other houses were all two- or three-family houses.

The single-family house had a large yard with beautiful flowers.

"They must be good people," Papa said, "to take such good care of their land. Some day we will have a house with a big yard and plenty of flowers."

We could not sleep too well the first night. We seemed wedged in. Even Ben Hur sensed a difference and for the second time cried all night. Every time we heard him cry, we would all run into Papa's room. He sent us all back to bed and said he would call us if he needed us.

"We can't sleep," we said. "It's too hot."

"Everybody upstairs seems to be sleeping, so if they can, we can too," he convinced us.

"The beds aren't as pretty as we had in Mr. P's house," I said.

"They are all iron beds. They are cooler. That's why I got them," Papa laughed. "They are just like Mother's in the hospital."

This satisfied us and we all went back to bed to complete our first night in our first home since we left Marash.

Our playmates were the same ones we had just around the corner, although Nora was the only one who had become acquainted with anyone. Tirzah and I were too busy and Cynthia was always afraid to go out because she might be sent to the store.

Mrs. S. upstairs had three daughters, one Cynthia's age, one Nora's age, and one four years old. They played very well together. Tirzah and I had to forget we were children. The only chance I had to go out was when I took Ben Hur out. Tirzah did not even have time for this.

A few days were left before the opening of school. I think each day Papa thought Mrs. S. or Mrs. K., another friend on the same street, would offer to take care of Ben Hur while we went to school. When they advised him that he must find a place for the baby soon before school began, Papa's last ray of hope died. We had to board out Ben Hur. We didn't know how to break this news to Mother.

One day a member of the Church Committee called on Papa with a Mrs. Warner.

"Mrs. Warner is from the Children's Aid Society," he said. "She has always worked with our former ministers and you should get acquainted."

"If there are any families in your church whom I can help..." she began.

"Maybe you can help me find a good home for my baby while the girls are in school," Papa said. "We want him near us so that we can have him with us at night and during week ends."

"That will be too difficult for the girls," she said. "They are too young to bear such a responsibility."

"But we don't want him to go," we all said, very much alarmed.

Papa made an appointment to visit a few homes the next day with Mrs. Warner to arrange for a boarding place for Ben Hur. At this point we were willing to have a housekeeper rather than let Ben Hur go away, but the house was too small for an extra person and Papa had not been able to get someone to come just for the day. All other possibilities seemed exhausted. We dreaded the departure of another member of the family.

It was Ben Hur's last day with us. He was to go to a home in Dorchester. We did not know where or how far Dorchester was but everyone seemed to console us by saying it was not far.

We did not know how to break the news to Mother. She would find a way to find out how far Dorchester was from Brighton.

We could not sleep that night. Ben slept peacefully. I think we all secretly hoped he would cry all night so we could stay up with him. Papa said it would be better if he took him alone.

"You have to go shopping with Mrs. S. and Mrs. G.," he said. "You

must get ready for school."

We packed Ben Hur's clothes, kissed and hugged him, and gave him to Papa to take away. He seemed so happy he waved back to us, showing his brand new teeth. He was now seven months old and we thought he was the prettiest and smartest child in the world. We envied the lady who was to take care of him.

After he and Papa were out of sight, we went into the house. It seemed so empty.

"Someone is always going away," Nora said disgustedly.

This made us all cry loudly.

"Why couldn't Mrs. S. or Mrs. K. take care of him?" we said. "They live upstairs. It wouldn't hurt them to look after him for a few hours a day."

"Because they are Turks!" I said.

I could not think of anything worse at the time.

"Damn it!" Nora said.

"Nora!" we all yelled and this changed our mood. For a seven-year old she was learning too fast.

"If you promise not to say that word again," Tirzah said, "we won't tell Mother or Papa."

"I know something worse than that!" she threatened.

"What is it?" I said.

"Never mind," Tirzah said. "Everyone get busy. The beds have to be made, the dishes washed, and we have to be ready when the ladies come to take us to Boston shopping."

"I don't want to go shopping," Cynthia said.

"All right, then, you will have to wear the clothes we pick out for you. You can't complain if we bring you something you don't like," Tirzah said.

When the ladies came to take us, Tirzah gave them the money Papa had left. After they looked the house over and asked a million questions, we were ready to leave. We could not find Nora.

"That girl," Mrs. S. said. "She should have been a boy. I wonder where she is."

"She's probably playing on Thompson Hill," Tirzah said.

Thompson Hill was on Faneuil Street where we used to live

before we came to Brackett Street. It was an empty lot with many trees.

"I'll find her," Cynthia said, but we did not trust her. This might give her a chance to evade the shopping expedition.

"We'll start out for the trolley line," Mrs. G. said, "and you catch up to us."

Nora beat everyone to the trolley line.

It was not a long ride to Boston. The car line was on Washington Street. Brackett Street was off Washington Street. The car went through Brighton, Allston, then into the subway.

"Were you ever on a streetcar?" the ladies asked.

"Yes," Tirzah said. "There are streetcars in Constantinople."

"Were you ever in a subway?" they asked, hoping there was something to which we would say "No."

"Yes," Tirzah said. "We lived in New York about three weeks. Father took us everywhere in New York."

"Did you see the tallest building?" they asked.

"Yes," we said.

"What was the name of the building?" They were cross-examining us.

"The Woolworth Building," Tirzah said. She could remember better than we could so we let her be the spokesman. "We had lunch on the twentieth floor."

"Have you ever been to Jordan Marsh's or Gilchrist's?" they asked.

"No," Tirzah said.

This pleased them. "Well, then, we will go there to shop," they announced.

Whenever we picked a dress from the rack, they said it was not right for us. They bought dresses alike for Cynthia, Nora, and me. They thought we should go to the misses department for Tirzah. Our dresses were cotton but Tirzah's were silk. Then they took us to the underwear department. They bought us long drawers.

"I won't wear that," Cynthia announced. No one paid any attention.

"We'll cut the legs off when we get home," I said. "They won't know the difference."

"I bet they will examine us when we wear them." Cynthia said.

Then they bought us high shoes. Almost all the children we had seen were wearing them so we did not complain. They bought low shoes for Tirzah.

"They must think you are old enough to be married," I whispered to her.

"Hush," she said, not knowing what was coming next.

"We will now go to the Ferris Waist Department," they said with great satisfaction. We did not know what this department was so we followed curiously.

"Cynthia and Nora won't need any," they said.

"I want one!" Nora said.

Cynthia was more cautious. "What is it?" she wanted to know. No one paid any attention. I wondered why they included me.

My dresses were the same as Cynthia's and Nora's. If I had to wear a Ferris Waist, whatever that was, why didn't I get silk dresses?

The saleslady and they talked it over, measuring us around the waist and the bust.

"Tee hee, they are corsets," Cynthia said, "like Mother wears."

"They are not corsets," one of the ladies said. "They are foundations for young girls."

"We haven't time to let them try them on," Mrs. G. said.

"I think they will be all right. We must buy them hats before the stores close."

So we went to another store to try hats. They bought Tirzah and me black beaver hats, with bands and streamers down the back, almost to the waist. Nora's and Cynthia's were brown. I liked this part of the shopping best. The hats looked almost like picture hats, like the ones ladies had worn on the ferry boats that went between Constantinople and Scutari. The hat made me forget the long drawers for a while.

On the way home I felt very much confused. My dresses were the same as Cynthia's and Nora's. They did not get Ferris Waists and I could not understand why I should.

As soon as we got home, the ladies wanted Tirzah and me to try the Ferris Waists. Tirzah tried hers like a lady and they seemed satisfied.

When I tried mine on, I cried, "I'm choking! I'm choking!"

"Maybe she is too young," Mrs. G said.

"I don't think so," Mrs. S. said. I agreed with Mrs. G.

"In a few weeks we'll take you in town again," they said, "to buy your winter coats."

With this threat, they left us.

After they left, I said, "I can buy my own coat."

"Don't be so ungrateful," Tirzah said. "They are trying to help us, to take Mother's place."

"I don't want them to take Mother's place," Cynthia stamped her feet.

"Well then, you can go shop yourself," Tirzah said.

This was always an effective way to stop Cynthia. With this silence, a terrible thought struck us. Ben Hur was not with us.

This would be Ben's first night away from us. Papa was to go to the hospital after he left Ben in Dorchester. We wondered how he would break the news to Mother. We were all anxious for his return. Tirzah half-heartedly began to get supper ready. Ben Hur's high chair and crib looked so empty.

We deluged Papa with questions when at last he came. Now we had two members of the family away. There would be more questions to ask.

"Did Ben Hur cry when you left him?" we asked.

"I waited till he fell asleep," Papa sighed.

"When can we go to see him? Are there other children in the house with him? Is the lady old or young? Can we see him everyday? What did Mother say? Did she cry?"

Even Nora was quiet at the table.

"It's not like home without a baby," I said. "The lady in the house with the pretty garden has no babies. I should think she would want several of them."

"She's a sourpuss," Nora said.

"What is a 'sourpuss?'" Papa asked.

"I don't know," Nora answered, "but all the kids call her sourpuss."

"What are kids?" Papa asked. "Where do you pick up all those expressions?"

"The kids are the kids I play with," Nora said.

"That's what they call children," Cynthia added. She had been playing outside more and more the last few days.

"Kids are goats," Papa insisted.

"Not in this country," I said. I had been sneaking out to jump rope whenever I could and the hopscotch season was at hand.

"You too?" Papa exclaimed. "What will happen when you all go to school, I wonder?"

This reminded us of our shopping activity. We brought out box after box, chattering or groaning, whatever the item happened to be. Papa tried to look interested but he seemed to have other things on his mind.

"Tomorrow we can all go to see Mother," he said. "Wear your new clothes so she may see them."

That night, "tomorrow" seemed far away. There was no gaiety at the table, no baby sitting on the high chair to entertain us, no baby to tuck to bed. Our telephone had been installed that morning before we left for Boston. It was a relief to have the bell ring to break the dreadful silence at the table. Papa answered it and seemed relieved because he had to go out. One of the old ladies in church was very ill and wanted to talk to the minister.

It seemed we did not have enough work to do that night.

"Get your clothes ready for tomorrow," Tirzah said. "We must look our best for Mother."

"Well, I'm not going to wear the long drawers or the Ferris Waist," I said. "I'll just wear my new hat."

"We'll get a horse and you can go as Lady Godiva," Tirzah said.

"Who is Lady Godiva?" Cynthia and Nora wanted to know.

Even when we did not hurry, the work seemed to get done fast that night. Our clothes were ready for tomorrow, the dishes were done, it was too early to go to bed and we did not want to anyway.

"By the time you take your baths, it will be late," Tirzah reminded us, going to light the gas stack for hot water.

"No gas," she called, whereupon Cynthia dashed for the glass jar with the quarters. She could not reach it so Tirzah and I tried. We were about the same height. None of us could reach it. Papa had

always been at home before. With the help of Ben's high chair we reached the meter box which was practically in the ceiling. This diversion dispelled our gloom somewhat but wheeling Ben Hur's chair back to the kitchen again dampened our spirits.

"Let's call up Mrs. McDonald to see if Ben Hur is all right," I said.

"I know how to use the phone," Nora said. "I'll call."

"No one will call without Papa's permission," Tirzah settled the question. "He will be asleep anyway."

"If he could talk, we could call him everyday. I hope he won't forget us," I added.

"Of course, he won't," Tirzah assured us. "Not if we go to see him often. We won't let him."

"What if he wakes up in the night and asks for us?" Cynthia wanted to know.

"How can he," Nora said, "he doesn't know how to talk."

"Mrs. McDonald will take good care of him," Tirzah said hopefully, "and maybe week ends we can bring him home."

"Not every weekend. Mrs. Warner said so," Cynthia added gloomily.

It was hard to change the subject but we were interrupted by Mrs. K. who wanted to see our clothes and ask about Ben. We showed our clothes but remained inarticulate about Ben. After all, if she was so interested, why couldn't she have offered to look after him just a few hours a day. We were really bitter about this until Mother convinced us that we should never judge people's actions.

"There is always a good reason which we may not know," she had said.

We tossed and turned in bed. It was a relief when Papa came home. We wanted to know if the sick lady had died. What did she want to tell him anyway? We were looking for excuses to get out of bed. How come we could all go to see Mother tomorrow? Was Mother getting better? Papa's silence to this question was a bad sign.

We tried to go to bed again. Someone was always getting up to get a drink or go to the bathroom. This kept up all night. Papa read all night. Then he got up to write. His desk was in the dining room which looked more like a study as we did not have enough rooms

for a study or library. This was a good time to write his sermon, he said.

"When we go to school, maybe we can do our studying at night too," I said. I did not realize how prophetic I was being.

In the morning after breakfast, Papa was forced to tell us why we could all visit Mother today. She could have as many visitors as possible because very soon she would be transferred to a hospital far away, "for her quicker recovery," he added to soften this latest blow. "It is best for her to go to a sanatorium."

"What is a sanatorium?" we wanted to know.

"It is a place where people can rest as well as be treated," he added, not sounding too convinced himself.

We took the streetcar to Allston where we had to change cars for Huntington Avenue via Brookline Village. Today it seemed good to have to make changes. It interrupted our train of thought. Before this it had seemed a nuisance. Our new clothes did not make us feel any gay. Tirzah looked so different. She could have passed for eighteen. I would not wear my Ferris Waist, although I had tried it again and felt that I was choking.

When we arrived at the hospital the nurse at the desk said Mother already had visitors so we could not all go in. Papa said he had permission to bring all of us because she was soon to be transferred to Rutland.

The "other visitors" were the ladies who had shopped for us. They seemed so proud to see us come with the clothes they had selected.

"How do you like their dresses?" they asked, very much pleased with themselves.

"Do young children wear such long dresses?" Mother asked.

"We thought because they are minister's children, you would want them to," they answered with much surprise.

"I want my children to dress just like other children," Mother said, to our relief.

We wanted Mother all to ourselves.

Mother thanked the ladies graciously.

"I am sure the girls appreciate it, too." Mrs. S. told her about my

refusal to wear the Ferris Waist. Mother promised her she would talk to me about it.

As soon as they left, Mother asked us if we liked the dresses we were wearing and why I would not wear the Ferris Waist.

"If I have to wear a Ferris like Tirzah, I don't see why I have to wear high shoes and dresses like Cynthia and Nora," I retorted.

"Remember the talk I had with you and Tirzah?" Mother asked.

"Yes, but I don't see why I have to choke with that thing on."

Mother said since it was still warm weather, maybe we could have the sleeves from our dresses cut short.

"I think the doctors would let me sew a little each day," she said. "I can fix the sleeves for you if that will make you happier."

Mother and Papa talked in Armenian for a few minutes.

Mother was anxious to know about Ben Hur's new home. We promised that as soon as we visited him, we would write her about the lady, her house, Ben Hur's nursery, and everything the lady would show us. We had all planned to see him Sunday. Papa promised he would bring him to see her before she left for Rutland.

Mother asked Papa to try to find a piano teacher so we could start our lessons as soon as possible.

"They have already lost so much time," she said.

"I want to take violin lessons," I begged.

"Not you," Papa said. "Maybe Cynthia and Nora should take violin lessons and you and Tirzah piano lessons."

"I won't take violin lessons," Cynthia said. "That's for boys."

"I want to take trumpet lessons," Nora insisted

"That's right," Papa said, "that would make more noise!"

Mother told Tirzah it would be best for her to save her dress for parties later. She did not think it would look right for school.

"Maybe you can do your own shopping now," she suggested

"I know how to get to Boston," I said, "and I want to buy my own clothes, too."

"You are too young," Mother said.

"If she could walk from Marash to Islahia, I guess she can take the streetcar to Boston," Papa remarked.

With this encouragement, I begged Mother to please let me go to Boston to shop.

"All right," she said.

The next time we would see Mother would be after schools opened. We would have so much to tell her.

"Will you have time to take them?" she asked Papa.

"If Mrs. D. does not send for me unexpectedly," Papa said.

"They should not have any language trouble. After all that's the one thing we planned in life that should work out all right."

"Already I can't understand Nora's language," Papa smiled.

"Even in the hospital I am learning a new vocabulary," Mother added, "and new accents. We will have to discard our English and learn American. We were wrong when we told the Turks we spoke American!"

"I know your teachers will be as good as the doctors and nurses have been to me," Mother said, "You get to bed early at night so you will be fresh for school."

She made us promise we would all help with the work and plan the lunches so that it would not take long when we came home for lunch. She kissed us on the forehead and wished us good luck with school.

"Have all your clothes ready the night before. Set the table and plan breakfast. After the first day you can tell what you left out. The next day you can improve your plan and maybe in a week you will have a perfect plan."

On the way home we teased Papa.

"Can't we go to see Ben now?"

"We'll all go on Sunday," Papa promised, "so you can see him before school opens. After that we'll see."

The Sunday before school opened we all went to Dorchester to see Ben Hur. Papa had visited him before but it was the first time for us. We wondered how he would show recognition. Mrs. M.'s was a two-family house. She lived on the first floor. As we rang the door bell we could hear a baby crying.

"That's Ben," we said excitedly. "Do you suppose he knows we are coming?"

No one answered the bell so we took turns ringing it. Ben was still crying. We were getting impatient and anxious. Soon Papa went

to the back door and found Mrs. M. engaged in back fence conversation.

"The girls are here to see Ben," he said, "and we think we hear him crying inside."

Soon we could hear Papa and Mrs. M. inside. They had forgotten us outside. When we finally got in the house Papa had Ben Hur in his arms. We all rushed to hug him but stepped back in surprise when we saw Ben Hur's hands swathed in bandages.

"He is such an active child," Mrs. M. was saying, "I don't see how he could have reached that stove. And are these all your children? All girls and just this boy? And how is their mother?"

Mrs. M. was trying to be nonchalant.

"Not so well," Papa answered. "She may have to go to another hospital away from the city. In that case I may take the baby for a few days before she leaves. I will call you before I come for him."

We all took turns taking him in our arms. He was seven months old. We felt sorry he had no children to play with.

"I wish we could take him home," Nora said. "Why haven't you got any children?" she asked Mrs. M. "Why don't you get some so he could play with them?"

Cynthia nudged her, whispering, "Maybe she has no father. You can't have babies without a father."

"Why don't you get a father?" Nora asked Mrs. M.

"Bet she's a lively little one," Mrs. M. said.

"Too lively, I am afraid," Papa answered.

We didn't want to leave Ben Hur. We begged Papa to let us take him home.

"You have to go to school in a few days. Mrs. M. will take good care of him," he said, hoping I am sure, she would live up to his promise to us.

It was an unhappy journey back home. Papa was silent. Generally our streetcar rides were lessons in reading. We read the advertisements and asked questions. The hair net ads intrigued me.

"With a hair net, Miss Tidy," one read, "without a hair net, Miss Untidy." It was the same lady but so much more beautiful with a hair net.

"We did not get any hair nets for school," I said to Papa. "The ladies must have forgotten."

"You have to be a grown up lady to wear one," Cynthia said disgustedly. "You don't look like that. That looks more like Tirzah."

"Well, maybe if I had a hairnet I would look like that," I said.

"You will have plenty of time to look like that," Papa spoke finally.

We were glad to have him say something. It was always a bad omen when Papa was silent. We searched the ads again. We had made him say something.

"Are you wearing an Arrow Collar, Papa?" Tirzah asked. "The ladies forgot to shop for you."

His smile indicated he was not hurt by their neglect.

We arrived at Park Street subway. Papa put us on the Brighton-Newton-Watertown car.

"Do you know where to get off?" he asked. "I want to stop to see Mother for a few minutes and then I am going to see Mrs. D. She is very ill."

When the car got out of the subway we all watched for the landmark that would indicate ours was the next stop. It seemed no longer a ride than usual today. We saw the sign "Bennett Street."

"That's where I'll go to school," Tirzah said. "Mrs. S. said anyone above the sixth grade from our district goes to that school."

Then we saw Turner Street. Mrs. S. had said Cynthia and I would go there.

Nora would go to the Hobart Street School. We could not see Hobart Street from the car line.

"I know where my school is," Nora said.

"How could you?" we all asked.

"I play in the yard there," she answered smugly. That explained her long absences from home.

"Oak Street," the conductor called. We all jumped. That was our stop.

"Hi, Nora," some children said as we walked home.

"Hi, Jimmy, Hi, Lucy, Hi, Pudge," Nora kept answering. Cynthia knew some of them too. The two girls I had jumped roped with

were not in sight. I was disappointed because I could not say "Hi" to anyone. Poor Tirzah had never been out to play so she didn't even expect to know anyone yet.

A new life would begin for us when we started school. We had never been to a public school. It had always been private lessons or in classes with no more than half a dozen students.

Tirzah had the key to the house. We could hear the telephone bell ring.

"Hurry up, open the door," we shouted. "Maybe it's Papa or Mother."

"Or Ben," Nora added, getting to the phone first.

"Someone wants Papa," she said, passing the phone to Tirzah.

"He went to see Mother, then he will be there," we could hear Tirzah answering, adding, "I'm so sorry," as she hung up.

"Mrs. D. is dying," she announced to us.

"It's a good thing all her children are grown up," she sighed.

We helped with supper. Nora was nowhere in sight. Cynthia went after her. Then I went after Cynthia and Nora.

"We will have to have some more rules around here," Tirzah announced. "No going out without permission."

"Why don't you get a whistle like Jimmy's mother?" Nora wanted to know.

"So you would blow it?" Cynthia guessed.

"What bedlam if every mother on the street had a whistle to call the children in!" Tirzah said.

"What's bedlam?" Nora asked.

"How do you spell it?" Cynthia wanted to know.

"Read the Bible if you want to find out," I said.

"I promised Mother I would read the Bible every night if God made her well," I reminded everyone.

It was Tirzah's turn to remind me: "Don't forget, Mother said 'God does not make bargains. If you want to read the Bible you should read it no matter what God does.' You heard Mother say that."

"Well, I am reading it," I said. "All they do in the Bible is beget and beget," I told her, to prove I was reading it.

"Well, you can skip that part," Tirzah said.

"If I'm going to read it, I'm not going to skip any part," I said.

Mother had read the Bible through fourteen times. The dates she had begun and finished were written in back of her Bible. I had seen it in Marash. Mother had wondered what would happen to the Bible when the Turks came to our house.

"They will probably burn it," she had sighed.

All the dates of our birthdays were in it. The day Grandpa had died and the date Uncle died were written there, too.

"Maybe the neighbors will get it first and give it to my mother," Papa had said hopefully.

"Mother will cry if she knows Ben was burned," Cynthia said.

"Papa won't tell her," Tirzah replied. "He won't add to her troubles. None of you must tell her either."

"Let's go tomorrow and bring him home," Nora said.

"Who will take care of him when we are in school?"

Cynthia challenged.

"I won't go to school. I'll take care of him," Nora promised.

We were all thinking the same thing—a way to get Ben Hur home. How could we persuade Papa?

"Mrs. Sourpuss has no children. Maybe she can look after him," Nora said.

"You must not use that word," Tirzah said. "Don't you know her real name?"

"I'll find out tomorrow," Cynthia promised. "I can go to her porch and read the name on her door."

"She won't let you get near her porch," Nora said. "The kids said so."

"Her husband is a motorman. We'll call her Mrs. Motorman till we find out," Tirzah said.

"I think he's a policeman," Nora said. "She told us kids she would call the police if we played on her sidewalk."

"Well, then, don't play near her house at all," Tirzah said. "But her husband is not a policeman. Policemen's uniforms are different."

"She would scare Ben Hur," Cynthia said. "We better not let her even look at him."

What to do about Ben Hur was still puzzling us. It was such a long way to Dorchester. We had lost confidence in Mrs. M.'s ability to take care of him, although Papa had said accidents can always happen with children. But he had looked very worried, too.

"Why can't we take him to school with us and let him sit on his high chair?" Nora asked, very much pleased that she had solved the problem.

"What if he wets himself?" Cynthia said. "Then everybody will laugh." And we all laughed too.

"We will have to have a thinking contest," Tirzah announced.

It was not easy to fall asleep that night. This was a hard contest. Also, we tried to keep awake until Papa got home. We wanted to know about Mother. And about Mrs. D. We did not know who Mrs. D. was but knew Papa would be away from home frequently until she got better or died.

In the morning we announced the "thinking contest" to Papa. He said he would have to join us too. We had been thinking all night about bringing Ben Hur back home. We were delighted that this had passed through his mind.

We asked him if he told Mother about Ben.

"I did not want to worry her," Papa said.

I think this was the first American word Papa had learned. We had never heard of the word "worry" until we came to America. Ordinarily, Papa would have said, "I did not want to make her anxious." Papa was learning too.

"How is Mrs. D?" we asked.

"She is very ill," Papa said. "Her daughter is here from Chicago to take care of her."

"Where is Chicago?" we asked.

"Remind me to get a map or globe," Papa said. "Maybe you can find it in your geography books when you start school. Chicago is a day and a night away by train. Mrs. D.'s daughter was a friend of Mother's when they were girls in Marash. She wanted to know all about you children. She sent a cookbook for Tirzah."

"Where is it?" Tirzah asked. "I want to bake bread. Mrs. S. upstairs bakes her own bread. She said I should learn how to do it, too."

"You will be too busy when you start school," Papa said. "This is a wonderful country. You can go to the store and buy bread anytime."

"I think it will taste better if we bake it," Cynthia said.

"We will need flour to make bread," Papa said. "Cynthia can go to the store to buy the flour then!"

Cynthia's hopes waned.

Mother had said we would have a thinking contest to find out why Cynthia did not want to go to the store. We had forgotten about the contest when Mother went to the hospital.

Tirzah was busy studying the cook book. She made a long shopping list.

"We will have plenty to do today," she said. "Let's fill up the pantry so we won't have much shopping to do when school begins."

Schools would begin in two days. Papa looked at the list and said, "It would be too heavy a load for Cynthia." Cynthia's smile died when he added, "But she and Nora can come with me."

Tirzah kept busy in the kitchen while I made all the beds and cleaned house. Papa, Cynthia, and Nora returned laden with bundles. The shopping list had been doubled.

Papa said he had a surprise for us. He said he was going to bring Ben home and try to find someone to come to the house to look after him while we were in school. We jumped with joy.

"Can we tell Mother?" we asked.

"Let's wait till he actually comes home," Papa said.

He telephoned Mrs. M. and said we missed the baby so much that it made us unhappy.

"When school starts I am afraid they won't have a chance to see him more than once a week. It will be a bother to you if we come to your house every Sunday," he added. "I think I can get a neighbor to look after him while the girls are in school. I did not realize Dorchester was so far."

We listened intently.

"That's all right, Mrs. M. You don't need to refund anything. I'll be there tonight to get him if that will be convenient for you."

"What is a 'refund'?" Nora wanted to know.

"Remind me to buy a dictionary, too," Papa replied. "A map and a dictionary for you-and a concordance for me."

"What is at concordance?" we all wanted to know.

"That's a book I'll need when I am writing my sermons," Papa said. You may use it too when I buy it."

"I suppose I will have to dust that and the dictionary and the globe too," I mumbled.

"If you use it enough times, it won't need dusting," Papa teased.

"Now I'll dust Ben's crib and high chair," I announced happily, while the others were putting the groceries away. It was good to see Mellon's food on the shelf again. It almost seemed that Ben was already back again.

Tirzah began making her first batch of bread. We gathered around to watch her. We wanted to help. Our help extended to bringing the milk, getting the salt, finding the yeast cake.

Papa said he would show us how to use the yeast cake.

"It must be dissolved in water not too cold and not too hot. It is the same principle as using culture for making yogurt. The milk must not be too hot or too cold, or it will kill the microorganism."

"I guess we will need that dictionary," Tirzah said.

We went back to the bread making. The dough was ready to put aside. I began to read the directions: "First rising, put in a greased receptacle large enough to hold at least three times the bulk of the dough. Second rising, place in tins..."

Oh, the tins. We have no tins," Tirzah said. "Someone will have to go to the store to get some."

Cynthia had disappeared. Nora always wanted to go to the store.

"Cynthia or Nora won't know what to get," Tirzah said. So I had to go. I was finding that shopping was added to my duties.

"Mother said Cynthia should not be excused from it just because she does not like it," I reminded everyone.

"You go this time," Tirzah said. "You know where the hardware store is and you'll know just what to get better than Cynthia."

"Next time I am born," I said, "I will either be the oldest in the family or the youngest," and stamped out feeling very much abused.

On the way to the hardware store I passed the drug store. An ad

in the window showing a chubby baby drinking a Mellon's food formula changed my mood. Ben would be home tonight! Going to the store turned to pleasure. If I could have whistled, I would have. I had tried to but couldn't. Nora could whistle.

"Anyway, only boys whistle," I rationalized.

The bread was a great success.

"Take a loaf upstairs to Mrs. S.," Papa said proudly.

"I'll take it," Cynthia offered. She did not mind going upstairs. The daughter, Priscilla, was her age.

"Tirzah baked it. Let her take it," Papa decided.

"Tomorrow I'll bake a cake," Tirzah announced. "It will be like a celebration for Ben's home-coming."

We hurried with lunch so Papa could go to see Mother and then bring Ben. It was the happiest day we had since moving to Brackett Street, even though we did not know yet who would take care of Ben. Papa always found a way. He would again, we thought.

We got ready for Ben. We set the table in the dining room. Papa's place was at the head of the table. We put Ben's high chair at the other end. Cynthia's and Nora's chairs were near the living room. Tirzah's and mine near the kitchen door. We shifted this order every other week. Mother said we should take turns waiting on table. The ones who had to leave the table would sit near the kitchen door.

"Where would Mother sit if she were home?" Nora asked.

"Opposite from Papa, of course," Cynthia answered, "where Ben's high chair is, only we would move the chair so Ben and Mother would be on the same side."

"Ben will probably be all grown up by the time Mother comes home, I suppose," Nora said.

"Hush, don't talk like that!" we all exclaimed.

"Well," Nora said, changing the subject, "where are his toys? We should tie some to his chair on a string so he can throw it away and then pull it up again."

We looked out the window. We played the piano.

"Let's go to the car line and meet them," Nora said.

"You better not," Tirzah advised. "Sometimes Papa gets a ride. Someone may have driven him to Dorchester. Then you would miss

them and we'd have to wait for you."

That settled it, but we were getting impatient.

"Let's play a game or start something, then they will come," Tirzah said.

"Let's play odd or even," I said. We didn't have any marbles or any other convenient item with which to play so we got some pea beans from the pantry. We now liked baked beans so Tirzah had put it on the list. If Mrs. S. could bake her own beans, so could we. Tirzah was going to ask Mrs. G. how she made it; we had learned to like it at her house. But now we had our own cook book.

We sat at the table with the dry beans divided among us. We had first learned how to count by playing this game. It had become a family favorite.

"We will teach Ben Hur how to count tonight," Nora said. "Everybody's always trying to teach me. Now I am going to teach him."

She spread out the beans on the tray of the high chair. The door bell rang with a happy tone.

"They're here!" we shouted and ran to the door, spilling the beans all over the room.

Poor Ben was smothered with kisses and hugs. Papa was smiling.

"We men have arrived and we are hungry!" he said, as he almost tripped. There were beans all over the floor.

Ben had only one finger bandaged now. He had recovered very well from his burn.

"Did Mrs. M. cry when he left?" Nora wanted to know.

"Of course not," Cynthia answered. "She's not his mother or his sisters."

"She was sad," Papa said. "I am sure she will miss him but she understands how much we missed him."

Ben tried to talk.

"He is trying to say he is very happy to be back," Papa said.

"I am going to teach him how to count — with beans," Nora said.

We hustled to clear the table of the beans. Tirzah mashed the potatoes, taking great pains with Ben Hur's. We had prepared a list of things Ben could eat.

Papa said grace, a long one it seemed. We had our turns of saying grace. It was Nora's turn tonight but I think Papa thought it would not be quite appropriate. She would probably have thanked God for rescuing Ben from that woman who let Ben get burned.

We played with Ben until he fell asleep from sheer exhaustion. His crib which I had prepared was ready for him. It would be a pleasure to have this extra bed to make every morning.

How sweet he looked fast asleep, with his golden curls making him look like an angel.

We all tiptoed out of the room and began our evening chores. Tonight it seemed less of a chore. We all helped with the dishes. Today was a special day. We did not stick to our schedule of duties. After the evening work was done, Papa called a "business meeting."

"Schools will open next week," he began, "and we trust we'll find someone to take care of Ben Hur while you are all in school."

"Please," we all begged, "don't let him go away again."

"Never," he promised us, "but it will be hard to find someone to take care of him."

"I don't see why Mrs. K. or Mrs. S. couldn't look after him just while we're in school," Tirzah said again.

"If they don't want to that's reason enough," Papa said.

"Why don't they want to?" I asked.

"There could be several reason," Papa replied.

"I bet I know one reason," Nora said. "They don't want to change his diapers!"

This made us all laugh and we scattered to finish our tasks for the day, Papa promising that somehow God would help us find someone to take care of Ben before schools opened.

Ben's crib was in Papa's bedroom. Before we retired, we all peeked in to make sure he was still there and that we were not just dreaming. He looked so peaceful and happy.

"Does Mother know he is home now?" Cynthia asked.

"Yes," Papa said, "and we must find some way of taking him to see her. I must get special permission to let her see him."

We knew Papa would find a way. He had a special secret of not taking "No" for an answer, even when others had failed.

"If only Mother was home, too," Nora said.

I had wanted to say it all evening but I was afraid God would be angry if we asked too many favors of him. I could not understand God's ways yet. I had wondered so many times if the Bible had not made some mistakes. In one place it said God was a terrible God. In another chapter it said God was love. True, He had answered many of my prayers but there was always something else happening and it seemed I had to keep asking for more. Sometimes I even felt guilty that He was not paying much attention to me. Tonight however, I had really thanked Him from my heart because Ben was home again.

Now I thought, "He sent Ben home. He must know babies should have mothers to look after them. I'll wait and see what He does next."

Even this ray of hope made me a little glad that there was someone to whom Papa could appeal. There had been so many occasions lately when I felt sorry for Papa. I had heard the ladies who came to visit us say, "Poor man, he has to be a mother as well as a father to these poor motherless children."

I did not like it when they said "motherless" because we still had a mother, but I, too, felt sorry for Papa.

"He has so many things to think about and do," I used to think. "And he has no father or mother to whom he could turn. Maybe it is a good thing he really trusts God, and if Papa trusted God so much I guess I better too."

And so, when I said my prayers that night I told God that I really trusted him. And I remembered that now I could kneel down to pray. Not long ago, I remembered, I could not kneel down because it hurt my toes. I had promised God that if He made the pain go away, I would kneel down to pray.

The first time I had called God's attention to this, I was in the hospital in Adana, lying flat on my back because I could not turn my feet down. There was a "basket" holding up the sheets because even the pressure of the sheets hurt the wounds. Right after I prayed, I had tried to pull my feet away from the basket to see if I could kneel down. The pain was too excruciating.

"What are you doing!" Tirzah had asked from the next bed.

Then a nurse came in and asked if I wanted something.

"Yes," I said, "I want the pain to stop."

Just then someone in the hall gave a piercing cry. "That poor boy," the nurse explained, "is sicker than you. They had to amputate one of his ears."

Automatically I had tried to feel both my ears. They seemed to be there. The nurse put her hands on my forehead and said, "I think you will be well very soon. You have only a little fever left now," and, stroking my hair, left to go to the boy who was crying again. Then I had felt guilty that I had not given God enough time to answer my prayer. Maybe that unlucky boy and others in the hospital who did not even have a room but had to sleep in the corridors needed Him more than I. I had made my peace with Him before falling asleep and knew it would be all right to pray even lying down.

Here in Brighton, on the eve of Ben's home coming, I had relived a few moments from the past. But now I could kneel down as I prayed. I decided God must know what He is doing and had faith that someday Mother would come home too.

It was the first day of school. Tirzah, Cynthia, and Nora went to school. I looked out the window enviously. All the children on the street, dressed in their best clothes, were coming out of the houses. There was laughter and song in their hearts. Some mothers were kissing the children good-bye, others had the children by their hands, leading them to school.

I had known the night before that tomorrow I would not be able to go to school. Papa had been unable to find anyone to look after Ben Hur. He had called another "family meeting."

"Tirzah," he said, "you are the oldest and have lost too much schooling already. You must go to school tomorrow. Cynthia and Nora are too young to take care of a baby. Lydia, my girl, you are a grown up girl now, and I am afraid that leaves you to take care of Ben Hur. You are eleven years old and I know you will make a nice little mother. I am sure in a few days you can go to school, too."

I felt mixed emotions surging inside me. Of course, I wanted to

take care of Ben Hur. But I wanted to go to school too.

And now I was looking out the window, with Ben Hur in my arms. He was waving at the children who were passing by. Tirzah, Cynthia, and Nora had kissed him goodbye. Papa had left every early in the morning because Mrs. D. was dying and the family had called him to see her right away.

"Too bad," he said at breakfast, "I wanted to take you to school but now you will have to go alone."

Papa had already decided that Cynthia should be in the fourth grade. She was the same age as Priscilla S. who lived upstairs. Priscilla was nine years old, too, and going into the fourth grade.

"If Cynthia goes into the fourth grade," he had reasoned, "then Nora should be in the second grade, Lydia in the sixth grade, and Tirzah in the eighth grade."

"But I don't think they will do that," Mrs. S. said. "In fact, I know they won't. Anyone who comes from the old country always has to be put in the lower grades."

"But my children can speak English," Papa argued. "They won't have any language difficulty."

"But they have no promotion cards," Mrs. S. argued.

"They don't need any," Papa said. "I'll take them myself and tell them they can read and write just as well as anyone their age."

That had settled it. But in the morning Papa found himself with another urgent duty. He felt a little downcast.

"Remember," he said to Tirzah, Cynthia, and Nora, in that order, "grade eight, four, and two. We will save grade six for Lydia. After all there are two years between each child."

Just then Mrs. S. knocked on the door. "I am taking my children to school. I'll show you where it is if you want to come with us."

"Unfortunately," Papa said, "I cannot take them today, so if you wish, they will follow you. But remember, grade eight, four, and two."

And so, off they had gone.

Left alone with Ben Hur, the house seemed very quiet. Even the street outside was as still as the night. With Ben Hur in my arms and a few tears in my eyes, I walked to the kitchen. I had helped Tirzah all summer whenever she gave Ben Hur his daily bath. But today I

must do it alone. I was not going to let Ben Hur be deprived of any care.

As soon as he saw me drawing the water in a basin in the kitchen sink, he gurgled with joy. He almost jumped out of my arms. I could not manage to hold him with only one hand.

"How horrid it would be," I thought, "if on his first day with me he should get hurt."

I put him on his high chair while I prepared his bath. He was seven months old now and was beginning to crawl out of his chair. I caught him just in time as he slid under the chair tray. His bath was not ready yet. I put him in his crib.

"He will be safer there," I thought. But when I left the room to go to the kitchen, I was out of sight. This made him sob. It seemed he always sobbed and never cried. Somehow the sobbing of a baby seemed more heart rending than just plain crying. One seemed to cry when one was in pain or anger but sobbed only when the pain came from the heart.

I went back to the bedroom, picked him up and put him on a blanket on the kitchen floor where he could see me and I could see him. When I went to the bedroom to get a towel, he followed me, crawling faster than I had yet seen him. He followed me back to the kitchen, anxious for his bath.

I had learned how to test the water with my elbow. I did not want to burn him. The water was too cold. It had taken me so long to get ready that the water I had drawn had cooled off. I emptied the basin and drew some more water from the faucet. The water was cold. We had lighted the gas stack before breakfast but it seems a long time had elapsed since then. I would have to light the gas stack again. Fortunately, I knew how to do this, but found there was no gas!

I would have to put a quarter in the meter. This had been Cynthia's assignment at first but she was too short to reach the gas meter so Tirzah or Papa used to do it. There were plenty of quarters in a glass jar in the dining room, but I could not reach the meter. In the meantime, Ben Hur had been following me every place I went.

I had to place two heavy encyclopedias on the toilet seat in

order to reach the meter. (Papa had just bought a set of Compton's Encyclopedia.) Soon the water was hot but now I had to be careful not to have it too hot. I tested it with my elbow again, adding a little more cold water for a margin of safety. Ben Hur seemed heavier to pick up from the floor. At last, he was in his little tub, as happy as can be. He grabbed the soap and it slipped onto the floor.

I was afraid to leave him in the little tub while I went to get the soap. I would have to lift him out of the tub and take him with me to pick up the soap. When I tried to do this, he seemed so slippery that I almost dropped him. During my dilemma, as I stood at the sink next to the window, I could see Mrs. S. coming from school.

"Maybe she will come in," I thought, "and I will ask her if she will please get the soap for me."

I waited, listening to her footsteps, but the sound of her footsteps were getting farther and not nearer. Mrs. S. lived on the third floor. Her steps ended on the second floor where Mrs. K. lived. No doubt she had stopped there for her morning chat. Now I could not even have the chance to ask her in which grades Tirzah, Cynthia, and Nora had been placed.

A dash of water on my face and all over my clothes reminded me that I was attempting to give Ben Hur a bath. I am sure it would have made the baby happy to stay in the tub all morning until the girls returned from school and got the soap for me, but I did not want anyone to come to the house until I had made the beds. I completed his bath without any soap. He looked clean anyhow. I thought, it would have been all right even if he skipped his bath today. Tomorrow I would be more careful. I would have an extra cake of soap in the sink.

But there were other problems beside the lack of soap. I had put the towel a little too far away from the sink. I could not reach it unless I let go of the baby. Just for a second, I thought, it would be all right. It was not so far as the soap. Just as I was about to let him go, the door bell rang.

"Maybe it is Mrs. K. or Mrs. S. to find out what I am doing," I thought. But I could see the mailman going to the next house so gave up all thoughts of help. I finally picked up Ben Hur and took

him to the towel. It was such a relief to have him wrapped up in the towel. Now he did not seem so slippery, even though he tried to wiggle out of the towel and my lap.

I took him to his crib and oiled and powdered him as I had seen it done. Then I pulled up the rail in his crib and went to get his formula. Fortunately, Papa and Tirzah had prepared his Mellon's food formula the night before. Ben Hur had never drunk from a bottle so I had to feed him with a glass. It seemed awkward to feed him by glass. He grabbed the glass and spilled half in the crib so I had to put him on a high chair again. I had forgotten to put on his bib, so his clothes were now soiled.

"No one must see him like this," I thought, wondering if there were any clean clothes for him, but I finished feeding him just as he was. Then I put him in his carriage which was in the kitchen and wheeled the carriage wherever I had to go. He could be strapped to the carriage and I felt this would be safer. I wheeled the carriage as far as the bedroom door and left it to look for clean clothes in the bureau.

As long as I was in sight, he did not cry, and I could watch him too. Before I had a chance to change his clothes, he began to make his funny morning noises. I waited until that part of the "program" was over and then changed his diapers and other clothes. I had changed his diapers many times after his daily routine so that was nothing new this morning.

Finally, clean and fed, he fell asleep and I left him in his carriage because I was still afraid of dropping him. "He will wake up if I move him," I rationalized.

It took much less time to clean the sink of the bathing utensils and do the dishes. It was already eleven o'clock. I knew the girls would be home for lunch sometime soon but did not know just when. I wanted so much to have everything done before they came so I hustled to make the beds. This, too, was routine for me as I had been making all the beds ever since Mother went to the hospital. And today I had done everything alone. Today, I was no longer a child. I was eleven years old and on my young shoulders had fallen the duties of a grown woman.

Papa and Tirzah had prepared our lunch.

"You must learn how to prepare everything in advance," Papa reminded us his oft-repeated instruction. "When you come home for lunch, you won't have time to prepare lunch. It must be ready. For a few days, maybe a day or two, Lydia will be home to set the table, but after she starts school too, very, very soon"—trying to appear optimistic, and reassure me, I think—"we will have to set the table the night before, too."

"Dear clock," I kept saying to myself, "please don't move so fast." I wanted to live up to Papa's boast that he bet by the time the girls came home to lunch, I would have everything ready—Ben bathed, fed, and in bed, the dishes done, the beds made, lunch ready. It was my first lesson in working against time and I was discouraged until I remembered how pleased Papa would be and how happy Mother would be that I had done all this.

This thought brought a little degree of satisfaction and spurred me on. I had not heard the clock ticking until I started to watch it. It sounded so loud now that I thought surely Ben Hur would wake up. I peeked under the carriage hood but he was sound asleep. Just then the door bell rang. I remembered it had rung once before today but I had forgotten about it. Then it had been the mailman. Who could it be now?

Now I did not have a slippery baby in my arms. I could go to the door. It was Nora, waving a letter from Mother.

"How come you did not meet the mailman today?" she asked. On other days we used to watch him and all of us run for the mail. Mother wrote quite often, almost every day, sending words of encouragement. The letter Nora was holding in her hands was addressed to all of us. Tirzah was not at home yet, just Nora, Ben Hur, and I. I was the oldest one in the house now so I tore the letter open.

"To my dear children as they start their first day of school," it began.

I wiped away a tear that was blotting some of the words, words that did not apply to me, I thought, because I did not start school today. "But Mother does not know that," I remembered.

Nora was trying to read over my shoulders.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," she kept saying.

I had forgotten she could not read as fast as I.

"By the way, what grade are you in?" I asked.

"I'll kill them," she said. "They put me in the first grade."

Nora was always "killing" somebody. When Papa had first reproached her about the use of this word, she said, "All the kids kill everybody."

"Why did Mrs. S. let them put you in the first grade?" I asked.

"Oh, she was in a hurry when she left me. She took Cynthia to another school."

Just then Cynthia walked in with tears in her eyes.

"They put me in the third grade, and Priscilla went into the fourth grade!"

"What did Mrs. Shamlian say to them?" I asked again.

"Oh, she let them," Cynthia replied, much more upset about her grade placement than Nora had been, although she did not threaten to "kill" anyone about it.

"Where is Tirzah?" Nora asked.

"Her school is much farther," I said, "so she won't get home as fast as you can."

"I ran all the way," Nora said.

I knew Tirzah would not run all the way. She was a grown up young lady, now-thirteen years old. We were all anxious to know in which grade she had been placed. As I was thinking "then they'll put me in the fifth grade if Cynthia is in the third grade," Tirzah came home.

She did not look a bit happy.

"What grade are you in?" we all shouted.

"I'm either in the sixth or the seventh grade," Tirzah answered.

"Two teachers are still arguing. While they decide, I'm in the sixth grade. And I know they'll leave me there because I heard one of the teachers say, 'My room is too crowded, and anyway apparently she has not been to school very much. She didn't bring any papers with her.'"

Just then we could hear Ben Hur's gurgling. It was the only

happy note in this recapitulation of the morning's history.

"I gave him a bath, I..."

"You should not have done it!" Tirzah said. "We could have given his bath when I got home. You might have dropped him."

How near she came to the truth almost made me shudder.

"Well I didn't," I said, "and tomorrow I'll know just how to do it. I'll have everything within reach of the basin. I'll..."

But no one was listening. "Maybe tomorrow I'll be in school, too," I thought and hoped.

Tirzah was reading the letter from Mother.

"She thinks of everything," Tirzah said in a shaky voice. "She'll be upset if she finds out Lydia could not go to school. Don't tell her."

Then Nora asked, "What else did she say?"

"She hopes you are behaving," Terry replied. "She also wants to know who is taking care of Ben Hur now," she said, half-audibly, and went to pick up Ben Hur. He seemed to like the idea of a crowd again. This morning he had only one playmate, if giving him his bath, making the beds, and preparing lunch could be called play.

"What are these books doing on the toilet seat?" Nora was shouting.

I hadn't had time to put the encyclopedias back in the bookcase after using them to stand on to put the quarter in the gas meter.

"Oh, I had nothing to do all morning, so I was playing school," I replied sarcastically. I was on the verge of crying at my own joke when there was a knock at the door.

Mrs. S. had dropped in to see how we were getting along.

"She did not stop in when I was alone," I thought to myself, "when she could have helped me."

"I bet you want to know what grade we all are in," Cynthia answered her before she had a chance to ask.

"I just want to know when Lydia will go to school," she said.

"Will you take care of Ben Hur then?" Nora asked.

Just then Mrs. S. remembered that she had something on the stove that might burn and that she better go upstairs and give the children their lunch.

Every morning in the days that followed I thought, "Maybe

tomorrow I'll go to school," but each day Papa would come home and say he could not find anyone but that he would stay home with Ben Hur until someone could be found.

On several occasions I prepared my clothes the night before because "tomorrow" I would really be going to school, but on each tomorrow something else would happen. On one of those times special tomorrows when I thought this time I am really going, Papa came home in the evening from the hospital.

Just by the expression in his eyes we knew that something was wrong.

"Lydia, my girl," he began and I knew that again tomorrow was not the day for me.

It was a day for Mother, another sad milestone.

"Tomorrow," Papa began, "I must take Mother on a long journey to a place called Rutland, to a sanatorium."

"What is a sanatorium?" we all asked.

"It is a hospital where all the patients generally have the same illness like Mother's, where she can get better care."

"Really, I don't mind taking care of Ben Hur," I said, hoping to make Papa's burdens a little lighter.

"Someday, someday, my girl, someday, things will be better," he said, trying to optimistic.

In the afternoons now, after the girls went back to school after lunch, just before Ben Hur's nap time, I indulged in a "recess period."

"After all," I thought, "If I were in school, I would be having recess," and thus rationalizing, I took Ben Hur in my lap and sat at the piano, playing all my favorite rollers on our player piano.

I looked forward to this "recess" every afternoon. It seemed the one bright moment of the day when I could forget house work and the outside world which I had not yet entered. And Ben Hur seemed to enjoy our daily musicale also.

Papa had bought almost every Chopin "roller" he could find. My favorite one was the roller marked "Nocturne, Op. 9, No. 2." Someday, I thought, I'll play that one just like the roller does, watching with fascination all the "notches" as the roller turned and

wondering which "notch" played which note. Ben Hur's little fingers would follow the keys as they went up and down.

As the days went on, I did my house work faster and faster so I could "play" the piano. Mother had said we should all start taking lessons right away. Papa said he would try to find a teacher as soon as possible, but poor Papa had other things in his mind. Today was the day he was taking Mother to Rutland. Today was a specially gloomy day. If I play the piano, I thought, maybe Ben Hur and I wouldn't feel so sad.

While I was playing the "Nocturne," the door bell rang. With Ben Hur in my arm, I went to the door.

"Hello," the man said, "may I come in?"

"Was someone playing the piano?" he asked.

"I was just pumping it," I said, wishing I could have truthfully said I was playing it. He could see the roller on the piano, of course.

Ben Hur had the cover of the roller in his hands and offered it to our "visitor," although we did not know yet who he was. He looked at the box and said, "That's a pretty heavy number for a little girl."

"It's not heavy," I replied, to which he laughed, but I did not know until many years later why he had laughed (and then I laughed, too).

After he had stopped looking at the roller box, he looked very grave.

"Why aren't you in school?" he asked.

I was too bashful to ask him who he was. Before I had a chance to answer, he said,

"Is your mother dead?"

I had tried so hard not to cry when he asked me why I was not in school, but now, when he used the word "dead," I could not contain myself.

"Don't be afraid, little girl," he said. "I am here to help you. I am the truant officer."

After I regained some composure, I told him I wanted to go to school but there was no one to take care of the baby.

"My mother is sick. My father took her to another hospital, to a sanatorium."

"Oh," he said, as if he understood.

"She was in the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital," I said, "but now she is in Rutland and it is farther away, so we won't see her very often."

"You poor child," he said, and this made me cry again, because people were always saying, "You poor child," or "the poor children."

Then he asked what grade I was in.

"I don't know yet. I have never been to school."

"What?" he said, "How old are you?"

"I am eleven years old."

"How did you learn English, then, if you never went to school?"

"My mother taught us" I replied proudly. "I can read, too. Mrs. Nute taught us."

"And who is Mrs. Nute?" he asked.

"She was the college president's daughter, and she tutored my sister and me, and her son, Miner," I chatted, "and we had other tutors..." and soon he had half the story.

"Well, that's interesting," he said, "and now let me hear you read."

Someone had given us the Bobbsy Twin series so I picked up one of the books, putting *Ben Hur* on the floor, and began to read for him.

"Well, I guess you can read all right," he said.

"I can read from the encyclopedia also," I added.

"What encyclopedia?" and I pointed to Compton's Encyclopedia in the bookcase in the dining room.

"Well, I believe you," he said, "but when are you going to school?"

"Maybe my father can tell you," I replied. "As soon as he takes my mother to Rutland, his next job would be to find someone to take care of *Ben Hur*."

"*Ben Hur*?" he asked, startled. "Who is *Ben Hur*?"

Ben Hur seemed to answer his question by crawling playfully toward him.

"My God," he said and stopped. I think I must have looked shocked.

"My mother named him *Ben Hur*," I said, "after the book *Ben Hur*. Have you read the book? In the book *Ben Hur*'s sister's name is

Tirzah, and my oldest sister's name is Tirzah too."

"My God," he said again, and stopped suddenly. "When will your father be home?"

"Very late tonight. He is in Rutland now. He said he would stay as long as possible with my mother."

"I guess I better come tomorrow," he said. "Tell your Papa we'll have to see that you go to school right away."

"My Papa wants met to go to school," I said. "He's going to find a lady to take care of Ben Hur."

The man was saying "Ben Hur, Ben Hur," as he went out. Maybe he is repeating it so he won't forget it, I thought.

As soon as the girls came from school, I announced, "The truant officer was here. He says I have to go to school."

"As if we did not know that," Tirzah sighed. "Poor Papa, as if he did not have enough troubles. I have homework tonight so I guess we better get busy with the day's chores."

So began another evening of routine — -getting supper ready, washing the dishes, putting "the children" to bed.

But no one except Ben Hur could sleep tonight. We wanted to find out about Rutland. We could not sleep until Papa came home. Cynthia and Nora eventually fell asleep but Tirzah and I were still awake when Papa came home.

I asked, "Did Mother cry when you left her?"

Tirzah asked, "Is it a nice hospital?"

Papa answered, "Yes, it is on a beautiful hill. Mother has a very nice room. If only it were nearer..."

When he went to his room, I whispered to Tirzah, "Shall we tell him about the truant officer?"

"Tomorrow morning," she said. "He has had enough for today."

So in the morning, when he said he would go to the Children's Aid Society to see if they could find someone to take care of Ben Hur, we told him about the truant officer.

"I will wait for him then," he said, adding that maybe he could help us find someone nearby who could take care of Ben Hur during the time we were in school, instead of all the time. "We could leave him there in the morning and either Tirzah or Lydia

could pick him up at night."

The thought cheered us all up.

"Just as if he was going to school, too," I said.

It was nice to have Papa home the next morning. He helped me give Ben Hur's bath. How much easier it seemed. While he was feeding him and putting him to bed, I made the beds and picked up the house. I had learned about "picking up the house" from neighbors. When I first used this expression, Papa said, "You are too little to pick up a house. What a funny expression, 'picking up a house,'" but whenever he had a chance, he helped "pick up the house" also. He was learning how to speak "American."

By mid-morning the truant officer came again. Papa was ready for him. He enlisted his help in finding someone in the neighborhood who might take care of Ben Hur.

"I wonder if he will say 'My God' again," I thought. He did not, and I was disappointed. I had wanted to watch Papa's face when he said this.

In a few minutes Papa had told him the family history.

"Lydia must go to school, I know," he said but he related the Dorchester incident where Ben Hur had been burned and emphasized that we must find someone very near where we could take him every morning and bring him back every evening.

Before the truant officer left, he promised to ask a relative of his who had five young children, all under six years of age, who lived across the street.

"One more should not matter," he chuckled, "and they could use the money."

The next day he came back and said, "I have good news."

Yes, it was the lady across the street. She would look after one more. Six would not be much harder than five. Papa went across the street with the truant officer to talk the situation over with the lady. I watched from the window. The house was diagonally across the street, the first floor of another three-family house like ours.

When Papa came back, alone, he said, "My girl, I think you can really go to school next Thursday."

Mrs. U. promised she would look after Ben Hur five days a week beginning Thursday, October 7.

Apparently, the financial arrangement had pleased her. We were to take his formula every day and a dozen oranges a week. We were to take fresh clothing every day and bring the soiled ones in the evening. It would be expensive financially but we would manage somehow, as long as Ben Hur could be so near and would be home every night.

When the girls came home in the evening, they were all glad to hear the good news, not only because I would be going to school too but especially because Ben Hur would not have to go far away again.

I wrote to Mother immediately, giving her the good news. I had begun to write to her almost every day since she went to Rutland.

"She must be so lonesome," I thought, "now that Papa could not go to see her every day as he did when she was at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital."

I was so excited that evening that I could not sleep well. I wondered what school would be like, to which grade I would be assigned.



CHAPTER 22

School in America

The morning of Thursday, October 7, 1920 was an exciting day for me and a sad day for Ben Hur. There were tears in his eyes when we left him with Mrs. U. He seldom cried out loud like most babies. Although it was a happy day for me because I was really going to school today, I had been disappointed so many times that I had learned to gird myself for whatever might happen next.

Although I was to go to the same school as Cynthia, she had already left with her playmates. Papa said he would take me to school himself and see to it that I was placed at least in the fifth grade. Cynthia was in the third grade and was finding the work too easy. I was just two years older than Cynthia, so Papa was reconciled to my being in the fifth grade. He would not allow me to be placed in any grade lower than that. I felt sure I would be in the fifth grade, because Papa had a very convincing way with him.

I was placed in the fifth grade. Schools had already been in session a month. All eyes were on me when I entered the room. The teacher was blonde and pretty but I wondered why she never smiled. Even when she greeted me and my father, she never smiled. I thought to myself, "Maybe she has a sick mother too."

The teacher introduced me to the class. "I hope," she said, "that we can show her we are polite children."

I wondered why she said this because I thought all Americans were always polite. I used to discount some of the things Nora used to say when she came home from school—how some Irish boys would call her names. I didn't know why people were always saying, "He is Irish, She is Italian, He is Greek, etc." I was the only

Armenian in the class. I thought everyone should be American. That's what Mother had taught us—that in America we must be Americans—good Americans.

On my first day everyone was polite. On my second day the boy who sat behind me called me "cutie." I didn't know what he meant. I had heard the older girls speak of "cutie garages," the style of hairdo the flappers wore in those days. [The popular hairdo may have been called "cootie garages," using the colloquial word, "cooties," for lice.]

I had learned about flappers, too, in pictures in the papers and advertisements in the streetcar.

I wondered why Mother had never explained the meaning of "cutie" and "flapper." I guess she did not have time to think of everything, I thought. She had tried so hard to prepare us for everything.

I didn't pay any attention to the boy who was calling me cutie. I had not even turned around to really see what he looked like, but when he pulled my curls, I automatically turned around to look at him. I must have looked at him severely, because he said, "Hello, bright eyes." I blushed and turned back.

A few minutes later he pulled my curls again. This time the teacher saw him.

"Ernest, you may leave the room right now," she said.

He left without seeming a bit upset. When I saw him walk out of the room, "How tall he is," I thought. He seemed too big to be in the fifth grade. He also seemed to be the best dressed boy in the class.

The girl who sat in front of me was very pretty. She took me under her wings during recess.

"Ernest really should not be in our grade," she informed me. "He's fourteen years old but hasn't been promoted for two years. He likes the girls," she added.

The class was learning the capitals of each state. I was so surprised that New York City was not the capital of New York.

"We will now have a test on the spelling words we reviewed yesterday," the teacher said, still looking very sad.

The children in the front of each aisle passed papers for the test

to those in his or her aisle. When the boy at the head of our aisle reached my desk, he tripped. Ernest, who had just returned to his seat, had stretched out his long legs. The teacher must have known I did not do it.

"You may stay after school, Ernest," she said.

We had ten words for spelling. After the test, the teacher said, "Now change papers with the person across the aisle."

The teacher wrote the ten words on the board.

"Now correct the paper you have very carefully, then return it to the owner," she told us.

After each person had her or his paper back, the teacher said, "Those who received a 100, raise your hands."

I was so disappointed that I could not raise my hand. I had misspelled "aisle." I had written "isle."

When she asked hands for "90," I raised my hand timidly. She saw my hand up.

"That's very good, Lydia," she said.

I imagined that I saw a smile cross her face.

"Lydia was not even here when we reviewed this list," she said to the class.

"Teacher's pet," I heard Ernest whisper, looking over my shoulders to see if I really had 90.

"What did you say?" the teacher asked Ernest in a reprimanding tone.

"I was just telling her she has to write the name of the school and the date on all papers," he said.

I was shocked at such flagrant lying, but I did add the date and the name of the school before I passed it forward as we were directed.

At the close of my first day at school, as I was leaving, with the thought that I would have so much to tell at the table today, the teacher called me to the desk. My spelling paper was in her hand. She pointed to the name of the school.

"The name of our school is spelled Mary L-Y-O-N," she said. I had spelled it "L-I-N-E!" "But you did very well today," she added, without smiling.

When I reached the school yard on my way out, I looked up at the front entrance, and there, in large letters, was the name of the school.

"Why didn't I notice it as I went in?" I thought. "I was too excited to notice the name of the school," I rationalized. I had heard Cynthia mention the name of her school for a month, I had known to which school I was to go, but I had not thought of its spelling.

Tirzah's school was much farther than mine, so I arrived home first. I dashed to Mrs. U's to get Ben Hur. He was on the floor of the living room, playing with all the little children of Mrs. U. He was wet and dirty, but he looked happy. He seemed very pleased to see me. Mrs. U., disheveled, wiping her hands on her soiled apron, picked him up lovingly. Surely, one could forgive her no matter what her house looked like. I thought she really loved Ben Hur. And, I thought, she even looked beautiful.

I had the "floor" that evening at the supper table. How enviously I had listened the past month to the school experiences of my sisters, wondering when mine would begin.

"In which grade are you?" came from all sides. Cynthia answered for me. She had seen me after school. During recess she and I didn't play together because each grade has to play together and not mix with the upper grades. After school she had run home ahead of me so she could climb Thompson's Hill to play. I had gone directly to Mrs. U's to pick up Ben Hur.

At supper, I told about my nice teacher who never smiled, of Ernest, the big boy who pulled my curls and called me "cutie." With downcast eyes I told about my spelling test.

"Too bad you did not get 100," Papa said.

"I also misspelled the name of the school," I added.

"How could you misspell that?" Tirzah asked.

"I just spelled it the way it sounded," I replied defensively. "Why didn't you tell me before I went to school how it's spelled?" I blamed Cynthia.

"The name is right on the wall," Cynthia replied.

"Well, I know that NOW," I replied.

"Now let's ask Ben Hur how he liked his school," Papa said,

picking him up from his high chair. It had been a special day for Ben Hur as well as for me. Papa said, "I think if he could speak, he would say he really was happy today," and Ben Hur gurgled happily and approvingly.

"I have a surprise for you all," Papa said, with a gleam in his eye.

"Mother will be home soon!" we all guessed.

He looked a little dejected, as if we had spoiled the good news.

"I wish it were that," he said, "but it is the next best thing. Next Tuesday is a holiday..."

"Columbus Day!" several voices echoed.

Even on my first day in school, we had geography and the teacher was preparing us for Columbus Day.

"Yes," Papa continued, "and I have special permission to take you all to Rutland to visit Mother."

"Even Ben Hur?" we asked.

"Yes," Papa said, triumphantly. "Dr. Hubbard, Mother's doctor, is a wonderful man. I think, because of him, Mother will get better sooner. He promised me that we may all visit her Tuesday."

It was a happier evening than we had enjoyed for a long time. Ben Hur was home at the end of the day. I had completed my first day at school. And in a few days we would all go to see Mother. The silver lining was breaking through the clouds.

On my second day in school I did not do so well. We had an arithmetic test. I felt lost. The teacher asked me to stay after school.

"Have you had long division? And multiplication?" she asked.

"I haven't had any arithmetic lessons," I replied.

She showed neither surprise nor disappointment, her face remaining immobile, but somehow through this immobility, I always detected a note of kindness and understanding, always imagining that there must be some sadness in her life.

"Maybe her mother is ill, too," I thought, hoping some day I would have the courage to ask.

"Well, then, you stay after school every day for special help, beginning Monday." It was Friday and all the children had left, looking forward to two days of "no more school, no more books, no more teacher's cross-eyed looks."

That evening, Friday, I had been in school two days. "No more school, no more books, no more teacher's cross-eyed looks" I was repeating, while measuring flour for the dough I was helping to make. Tirzah had been chief cook since Mother went to the hospital. I was chief housekeeper and nurse for Ben Hur during the first month that I did not go to school.

Everyone praised Tirzah for her cooking. "Remarkable," they would exclaim, "for a child of thirteen to cook and bake so well!"

Papa did not hesitate to invite anyone for a meal. He wanted to show off his children who were doing so well, especially Tirzah, whose cooking skill was now becoming well known. I thought I made all the beds beautifully, but no one ever looked around the house and said, "How well the beds are made. What a clean house."

One day while I was alone with Ben Hur I had tried to bake a cake, thinking that maybe someone would notice something I made. I wanted it to be a secret until it was all done. Soon after I had put the cake in the oven, the door bell rang. I opened the oven door, hoping the cake was done so that I could hide it. It was not done, so I left it in the oven.

At the door was a salesman. "Is the lady of the house in?"

"I am the lady of the house now," I replied.

"Where 's your Mother?"

"She is in the hospital," I said, with a lump in my throat.

"I'll come back when she gets home," he said and left, not giving me a chance to say I did not know when she would be back. When I returned to the kitchen, I heard Ben Hur crying. The door bell must have awakened him, I thought. I went to his crib and he stopped crying.

"Before I pick him up, I better take the cake out from the oven," I thought. Since Ben Hur had been burned while he was boarding in Dorchester, we were very careful not to let him get near the stove. When I left the room without picking him up, he began to sob. I hurriedly opened the oven door, and there, as flat as a pancake was the cake that I had imagined would make me so proud. I tasted it. I thought it really tasted all right, but it certainly did not look all right. Ben Hur kept sobbing, the door bell rang again. I didn't know

what to do with the cake, so I emptied it in the coal stove, soaked the cake pan, and went to the door, hoping it was not yet time for the children to come home from school. Oh, how I wanted to be able to wash the cake tin and put away all signs of my baking.

It was another salesman at the door. "Howdy ma'am,..." he began and I said at once, "My mother is sick in the hospital and I don't know when she will be home."

I wanted to shut the door and run in the house to wash out that pan, but I could not bring myself to do this without seeming rude. I waited for the man to say something or to leave. He opened his mouth, scratched his head, and left.

I rushed to the kitchen, washed the cake tin, while playing peekaboo with Ben Hur. When all signs of my baking had disappeared, I picked up Ben Hur, and just in time. Everyone was coming home from school.

I had imagined that for supper we would have the beautiful cake I had baked. My disappointment was mitigated only by the thought that I had hidden all signs of my attempt. Then Tirzah went to the ice chest and brought out the egg box to make some cake.

"Lydia, did you use any eggs today? I was sure we had more than this."

"I used two," I replied, thinking fast.

"What did you do with them?" she asked curiously.

"Would you like to see them?" I asked, still trying to think of an answer.

"Well, where are they?"

"They are in my stomach," I equivocated, thankful that I had tasted the fallen cake before throwing it away.

"Well, why didn't you say so in the first place?" she said, impatiently and dropped the subject, much to my relief.

The last time I had attempted to make the dough for the bread, Tirzah was saying, "Bring this, bring that, measure this, measure that."

I had rebelled saying, "Am I going to make it or am I going to be your errand girl?"

Today, she had too much to do, so she allowed me to do the

whole thing myself. I had tried to act nonchalant, confidently going about my business, repeating, "No more school, no more books, no more teacher's cross-eyed looks," when Papa walked in.

"I thought you liked your teacher," he said. "And she is not cross-eyed. I looked at her very carefully when I took you to school the first day. I know she did not smile, but she was not cross-eyed and it is not respectful for you to..."

We all laughed at him.

"Oh, Papa, that's just a saying. All the kids say it."

Tirzah finished baking a cake, fed Ben Hur his Mellon's food, and began to prepare supper, ordering Cynthia and Nora to set the table. Papa went to his desk to open his mail, saying, "Lydia, remember, the yeast cake must not be too hot or too cold—just right."

I finished the dough, covered the pan, and wrapped it in a blanket.

"Tomorrow I will bake it myself, without any help," I announced.

"Go ahead," Tirzah said. "I have enough to do without thinking about that. And Cynthia," she called, turning to the dining room, "tomorrow you and Nora can go to the store and do the shopping."

"I don't know what to get," Cynthia replied, ready with an excuse.

"Oh, I can do all the shopping myself," Nora boasted.

"It will be too heavy for you," Tirzah replied.

"I can go two or three times or ten thousand times," Nora said.

"I know you like to go to the store," Papa interposed, "but Cynthia must learn to do it, too."

"If Nora likes to do it," Cynthia said quickly, "I don't mind. I'll do the baking."

"That's my job," I said, "but you can help if you want AFTER you do the shopping."

Ben Hur awakened all of us early Saturday morning, as usual, and it was a good thing, too, because we had so much to do. Especially this Saturday. In addition to our routine chores of baking and cleaning and washing, we had to plan and prepare the clothes we would wear next Tuesday. We must look just right when we go to

visit Mother. She would notice every detail.

Cynthia came to the breakfast table looking very ill.

"She does not want to shop," I thought, but held my tongue, thinking God would punish me by making her really sick if I thought such thoughts. Papa touched her forehead and said, "Yes, you have a fever." I was so glad I had not said what I was thinking.

But Nora said, "Oh, now you can't go shopping, can you?"

"I'll go, if you want me to," Cynthia said.

"Oh, I don't need any help," Nora bragged.

"Lydia can go with Nora," Papa said, "after she does the baking."

Whether I went shopping or not, it was always my duty to make out the shopping list.

"You'd think I was the only one in this house who can write," I complained.

"Oh, I promised to take Mother a nutcracker when we visit her next Tuesday," Papa said, "so put that on your list too."

I put it on my list and said, "What if Cynthia is still sick next Tuesday? Does that mean she can't go to Rutland?"

"She'll have to be well by then," Papa said, "because it would make Mother worry." This was the first time he used the word "worry." He was really becoming Americanized. Ordinarily, he would have said, "This will make Mother anxious."

I was so proud of my baking success that I could have gone shopping a dozen times. I even felt solicitous of Cynthia, saying, "Do you want any medicine from the drug store when we go shopping?"

"No," Papa replied for her, "if she does not get better soon, we'll all go to the doctor."

Cynthia was so afraid of doctors that I felt sure she would be well before the day was over.

Nora and I made two trips and completed the shopping. Ordinarily, Papa used to do most of the shopping but today he had to go to several hospitals to visit his parishioners so that he might finish his calls before Tuesday. Tuesday he had to visit the most important patient of all. Papa had two churches now and the pastoral calls, more than the two sermons he had to give- one in

Armenian and one in Turkish—plus funerals and weddings, for which he did not take any extra money.

“Don’t forget the nutcracker,” Nora reminded me on our second trip to the store.

Fortunately, O’Keefe’s grocery store was at the end of the street. Across from O’Keefe’s was another grocery store. Two blocks away there was a drug store, a hardware store, and a dry goods store. We bought Ben Hur’s diapers from the dry goods store. I had asked Mother before she went to the hospital why that store was called a dry goods store.

“I don’t know,” she had replied, “unless it is because the goods are dry before Ben Hur uses them,” and we had all laughed.

O’Keefe’s did not have any nutcrackers so Nora and I went to the other store. They did not have any either, so we returned, our shopping chores completed except for the one item we could not find.

Upon arriving home, we found a visitor, Dr. Mulnix, minister of the local Congregational Church. He had heard about our family and wanted to welcome us and invite us to his church. Tirzah had told him briefly of our present status, Mother ill in a sanatorium, Papa a minister of two Armenian Churches in Boston.

Dr. Mulnix was a jolly man. He entertained us by doing tricks. He could put a half dollar coin in his mouth and make it come out of his ear. We knew there was a trick to this, so urged him to try it again, hoping we could watch it more carefully. He did it several times, but still we could not tell how it was done. Soon Papa came home, so our family’s history was repeated by Papa, much more detailed than Tirzah had given. Papa told Dr. Mulnix about his churches, adding that he preached in Turkish, although his parishioners were Armenian. This gave him a chance to explain why so many Armenians spoke Turkish instead of Armenian.

“We are an unfortunate people,” he said, then changed it to “were,” explaining that now we were in a country like the United States—a rock of salvation. He also expressed his real admiration of Woodrow Wilson who might have been the answer to the prayers of the Armenian nation and the League of Nations. Then they

indulged in theological philosophies which I could not understand. But I did understand Papa when he said, "The children should go to your Sunday school. My church is mostly for the older people who do not get the full benefit of a sermon in a language other than their native tongue." Papa added that many of his parishioners understood English perfectly but came just the same to support the church and to accompany their elderly parents.

Dr. Mulnix's visit had put us all in a gay mood.

"We can tell Mother about his tricks next Tuesday," Nora said.

This reminded me of all the things I wanted to say to Mother. I had not seen her since I started school. I had envied the others when they were telling her about their experiences. At that time I had no school experience, but next Tuesday, I thought, I would have so much to tell, although I had been in school only two days. By the time I saw her, I would have been in school three days.

On Sunday morning Cynthia, Nora, and I went to Sunday School at Mr. Mulnix's Church. Tirzah stayed home with Ben Hur. I liked going to Sunday School. It made me feel I was a child like the other children in my class. We were told we had to learn the Ten Commandments by next Sunday. I knew most of them but did not remember the right order. "I can practice while I make the beds every morning," I thought.

I liked my Sunday School teacher. Cynthia and Nora were in the primary division. I was in the intermediate division. Some of the children in my room at school were in my Sunday School class. Although I had known them for only two days, it seemed I was not among total strangers.

On Sunday afternoon I took care of Ben Hur because Papa wanted Tirzah to go to his church in order to sing in the choir. The Cilician Armenian Congregational Church rented the Shawmut Congregational Church on Shawmut Avenue in Boston. Since the church, as all others, had its service in the morning, the "tenant church" had to use it in the afternoon. I liked staying home Sunday afternoons because I did not have to do any work except taking care of Ben Hur. It seemed funny to be home and not do any work, just like Sundays when Mother was at home.

"Sunday is a day of rest," she would say, "so we'll leave all work for other days."

Tirzah wore her "grown up" dress to church and looked more like sixteen than thirteen. When she came home she said she was the youngest one in the choir. "You will make a good alto," the director had said.

Monday I stayed after school so the teacher could help me with arithmetic.

"You can read very well, but you need help in arithmetic," she said, without any inflection in her voice. She was very kind and patient with me. She even asked me what I was going to do the next day, Columbus Day.

"We are all going to see my mother," I said. She had been told why I was a month late entering school but she had not been told where Mother was.

"I hope you will find her feeling much better," she said, which pleased me very much.

Monday night we were all very much excited. Poor Ben Hur had to serve as a model. We tried on his rompers, trying to decide in which he looked the cutest. We decided on a blue one because that was Mother's favorite color. We had to get up early the next morning. We were to take a train at South Station for Worcester. At Worcester we were to take a bus for Rutland.

On the train we took turns holding Ben Hur. He seemed gay, as if he knew where he was going. He seemed to attract much attention on the train. Papa, as usual, engaged in conversation with nearby passengers who wondered where the Mother of this family of five young children was. Soon Papa had told them where we were going. One woman wiped a tear away at the same time trying to smile at us.

The sanatorium was on the outskirts of the town, on a lovely hill, a world apart.

We greeted Mother with mixed tears and smiles. We kissed her on her forehead as she had instructed us to do. She insisted on wearing a mask whenever she took Ben Hur in her arms, and while she did this, she spoke only with her eyes, and we did the talking.

I was dying to tell her about my school but everyone was talking at once. She was our audience and we the players. After a while Papa took Ben Hur from her, saying, "You will get tired. He is getting heavy, you know."

She gave him to Papa ever so gently and lovingly. Then a nurse came in to put a thermometer in Mother's mouth.

"Your family, of course," she said, stroking Ben Hur's beautiful blonde curls. "What a beautiful baby."

We thought so, but of course we could have been prejudiced. Then she counted us all.

"Five children," the nurse said, "five lovely children."

That pleased Papa, of course.

"I am a millionaire," he said, as he always did when people referred to his children. "Now, if you can make my wife well, life will be perfect."

"We're trying to do just that," the nurse said, "and she is a wonderful patient. That certainly should help."

"You hold Ben Hur," Papa said to Tirzah, "while I try to find Dr. Hubbard. I must check to see if Mother is behaving and eating well." He left with the nurse.

As soon as the nurse and the thermometer had left, Mother began, "Now, Lydia, tell me about your school. I am so glad that at last you have begun."

How did she know I wanted to tell her all about it, I thought?

"I'm in the fifth grade," I began. She interrupted to say, "That's fine. Thank you for writing to me about it. I am sure you won't have any trouble in catching up in reading and spelling. You may need help in arithmetic because, unfortunately, we did not have time to start you on that."

How does she know already?

"I have to stay after school to get help in my arithmetic," I told her.

Then I remembered that I had not done so well in my first spelling test.

"I got only 90 in my first spelling test," I said.

"That's wonderful!" she said.

I quickly added, "I spelled 'aisle' wrong."

"You probably spelled it 'isle,'" she said. I was even more astonished. I had not written her about that, I was sure.

Then I told her I had misspelled the name of the school. "I thought my school's name was Mary Line, instead of L-y-o-n. It sounded like that."

"Do you remember Miss Blakely in Marash?" Mother asked. "Did I ever tell you that Miss Blakely was a graduate of Mount Holyoke College?"

I certainly remembered Miss Blakely well, especially the day she invited us to tea and played the record "I'll go to Morrow and Come Back Today." How that had amused me.

"Miss Blakely graduated from Mount Holyoke College, not too far from here," Mother continued. "And you know who was the founder of Mount Holyoke College, the first college for women in this country? Mary Lyon. How interesting that you should go to a school named 'Mary Lyon.'"

Nora could contain herself no longer. She boasted about the Irish boys she had chased when they teased her.

"And I knocked them all down," she bragged.

"What do you mean by Irish?" Mother asked.

"I don't know," Nora replied, "just some kids who go to my school."

"You may call them 'kids' if you like," Mother said, "but don't say 'Irish' or 'Italian,' or anything but 'American.' In this country everyone is an American."

"Well, anyway," Nora went on, "I chased them when they called me names, so now they're scared of me."

"I don't blame them for calling you names if you call them names, too," Mother admonished her. "Do you know what Irish means?"

"No, but that's what some of the kids told me to call them."

"Before you call anyone names, first find out what it means," Mother told her, "then if it is something nice, go ahead and use it, but if it is not nice, don't say it."

"Next time I go shopping and they call me names..." Nora began.

"Well, just say 'sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me,'" Cynthia said firmly.

"Cynthia never goes shopping," Nora said, a retort on which Cynthia obviously had not counted.

"Cynthia, dear," Mother began, "in this country everybody goes shopping, not just the servants."

"So that is why..." Tirzah and I began telling Cynthia at the same time.

Mother broke in.

"Tirzah and Lydia are old enough to realize that, and Nora is too young to remember the customs of the old country, and Cynthia is too young to realize the customs here, yet old enough to remember some of the old. The next time you play 'house,' if you ever have time for this, Cynthia can go to the pantry and make believe it is a store. Then after a few times of playing this game, she won't mind going to a real store."

"Which reminds me, Mother," I said, "I couldn't find your nutcrackers in any of the grocery stores."

"We looked at all the cookies in the grocery stores and not one had any cookies with nuts in it," Nora added.

Mother was laughing so heartily that when Father walked in the room that worried look on his face was transformed.

"I asked for a nut cracker, dear," Mother smiled, "not for crackers with nuts."

This reminded her of a package she had for us.

"A friend sent it from California," she explained, "raisins and almonds, filberts, and walnuts. That's why I wanted a nutcracker. I did not want to bother the nurses each time I wanted to use it. Next time if you will go to a hardware store, I am sure you will find one."

"Poor Dr. Hubbard is too busy today, with all the visitors," Papa said in answer to the question we had not yet asked, "but all the nurses said you were their best and most obedient patient. They say they are trying to put weight on you."

"I know," Mother replied, "but it is not their fault that they can't. I know I should have plenty of rest and eat well. I am getting plenty

of rest but the poor doctors and nurses have a problem. Because of my diabetes, I cannot eat everything."

"What is diabetes?" we all asked.

It was the first time that we children knew she also had diabetes.

"When you get well and come home," Papa said, "you will be surprised how well Tirzah can cook and bake—anything you wish."

"Even Lydia can make bread," Nora added, much to my pleasure.

"How grown up you all seem," Mother said, "growing up before it is time for you."

At the time, I did not know quite what she meant.

Papa said it was time to get ready since we had to catch a certain bus in order to connect with a train in Worcester, so Tirzah began to get Ben Hur ready. Mother took him in her arms again and cautiously and gently caressed him. How she must have wanted to kiss us all, but she caressed us, trying to hold back her tears.

When we left, she looked out her window and we kept waving back to her until we were out of sight.

"Do you think she will come home someday?" Tirzah asked Papa.

"God willing," he replied.

As soon as we settled in the bus, Ben Hur fell sound asleep. On the train Nora fell asleep, too. Then Tirzah asked Papa how diabetes would affect Mother's getting better.

"It will not help," Papa replied. "To recover from her serious illness, she should eat well. To fight diabetes, she can't eat things that would help her to regain her health. We'll just have to trust in God to find a way out."

I just hoped God was listening to all this.

In school, our teacher said, "Yesterday was a holiday, so today the class will write a composition about what each one did, how each spent the day."

I had so much to write that I wrote as fast as I could. As soon as I filled the first page, I turned the other side.

"Don't write on both sides," I heard the voice in back say.

"Why are you whispering again, Ernest?" the teacher asked.

"I am just helping her," he replied. "She was going to write on the other side of the paper."

"How did you know unless you were watching her?" the teacher asked, walking down the aisle toward him. She picked up his paper. She gave me a blank paper to continue my composition on it, and told him to stay after school.

I stayed after school again that day to get help in arithmetic. My teacher was very patient with me. Ernest was staying after school too.

"Hey, cutie," he whispered, "I don't mind staying after school if you do. I'll walk home with you."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," the teacher replied. She always seemed to come to my rescue, fearing he might carry out his boasts.

Ernest sat in the back of the room, stretching his long legs across two aisles, not knowing what to do with his legs or himself while I sat at the teacher's desk, trying to grasp her patient explanations. After half an hour of drill, she said to me, "You may go now," and gave me work to take home. I thanked her as Mother had instructed me to do. Then, as if he was automatically dismissed, too, Ernest got up to follow me out.

"You can't go yet," the teacher told him. And I am sure I arrived home before she dismissed him.

One day when it was time for our oral composition lesson, the teacher asked the class who Mary Lyon was. I bashfully half raised my hand, then seeing no other hands were up, put it down again.

"Lydia wrote a very interesting composition the other day," she said, "and since no one else in the class seems to know after whom our school was named, I am going to ask Lydia to tell us."

This was my first experience facing the whole class. I wondered if the class could see my knees shaking. "I must do well," I thought, "so I won't disappoint Mother."

It had been easy to write my composition about my visit to see our mother on Columbus Day, and how I had learned who Mary Lyon was. But now, I was facing the whole class.

"On Columbus Day last Tuesday," I began, heard a few giggles, and stopped. The teacher came to my rescue.

"It so happens," she admonished the class, "that 'Tuesday' is the correct pronunciation of that word and just because everyone does

not pronounce it that way does not mean it is wrong."

I finished my composition about Mary Lyon. I joined the ranks of the gang but from then on, regardless of what the teacher had said, the third day of the week became "Toosday" to me also.

The time had come to train Cynthia to go shopping. We put a sign on the pantry door: "O'Keefe's, The Grocery Store." It was Saturday and Tirzah was doing the weekend cooking, while I was making the beds, cleaning the house, and washing diapers.

"Some of the ladies from the church will be here. I invited them to come here after the meeting," Papa had said last night, so we were all busy as bees. I knew they would look the house over.

Papa knew Tirzah would prepare a good supper. She had even learned how to bake beans. So now Cynthia was the errand girl going to the store, bringing this and bringing that to Tirzah. Soon she got tired of such a dull assignment, and the ringing of the doorbell gave her the excuse she needed.

"Mr. O'Keefe has gone home to lunch and the store is closed," she shouted and ran to the door.

"Hello, hello deah," we could hear a voice at the door.

"That must be Mrs. Deah," Tirzah said.

"The 'r' is silent in 'Dear,'" she had corrected Tirzah once when Tirzah said "Dee-yah." So we had nicknamed her Mrs. Deah.

She was Armenian, but she had lived in America for half a century, had prominent children in the community, and felt she knew the language as well as any native American. She was also a very sweet old lady and we did not feel unkindly when we referred to her as Mrs. Deah.

Cynthia, in her mature, ladylike manner had shown the ladies to the living room, saying "Papa will be right in."

Nora ran in to see what it was all about and returned shouting, "The old ladies are here, Papa."

After we silenced Nora, we did our ladylike duty of going to the living room and greeting our guests. One of the ladies had a newspaper in her hand which she was showing to Papa.

"Look at this," she was saying, showing Papa pictures of Ku Klux men lynching a colored man.

"Too bad," Papa said, "that a wonderful country like this should have such a thing happen, but I hope some day such things won't happen anymore."

Then they started to talk in Turkish and in Armenian to begin their meeting. The lady with the newspaper gave the paper to Tirzah, saying, "There are some good recipes here."

We were glad to have the paper in the kitchen. I ran to the dictionary and looked up Ku Klux Klan, also, the word "lynch." I was horrified and curious. I went back to the newspaper to look at it again, when Tirzah called,

"Lydia, bring..." I stamped my way to the pantry. I changed one letter on the sign on the "store" list that included shopping for "lunch." I went to find Cynthia. She was playing hopscotch on the sidewalk. How I had envied the other girls. I forgot why I had come out, so I joined the group and much to my delight found I could play it as well as anyone there. Soon I was beating the others. Then Nora came, shouting, "Lydia, Cynthia, come in at once. The meeting is over and you have to set the table."

I ran into the house, feeling like a successful champion, ready to resume my duties, with no ill feelings toward Cynthia, since I, too, had deserted Tirzah. The ladies were already in the kitchen, praising Tirzah for being such a nice little mother.

"Mrs. Deah" was looking at the pantry door.

"Oh, that's just a game the children play," Papa tried to explain.

"Who wrote that sign?" She asked, and all eyes were focused on it now.

"I did," I replied meekly.

"What grade are you in, dear?" she asked.

"Grade five."

"Lunch is spelled with a 'u,' not with a 'y,' she said.

I said nothing.

Our school did not have a sewing room, so the sewing teacher went to each room once a week. The girls had a sewing lesson while the boys went to another for manual training. My project was a blue pinafore. Since I was a month behind the others, the teacher was very much pleased with it when I finished it.

"Now, you take that home and show it to your mother, won't you?" she said.

My silence made her look at me curiously. She must have noticed my misty eyes. When I finally thought I could speak in a normal voice, I said, "My mother is not at home. She is in the hospital."

My home room teacher, Miss Pedersen, who was working at her desk must have grasped the situation. Many a time when children began to talk about their mothers, I am sure she never missed my misty eyes.

"I think Lydia should take her pinafore and show it to the principal of the school, don't you?" she suggested.

"That's a fine idea," the sewing teacher replied.

I hesitated.

"You go right to her room and tell her we sent you to show your fine work," my teacher said.

I was a little afraid of the principal. She taught grade 4. She seemed so formidable. She would never allow us to come into the building singly. We always had to form a double line and march in. If we arrived at school early in the morning or after lunch, we had to wait for the bell, form a line, and then wait for her to appear to give the signal to go inside. She used such occasions to make announcements and give lectures, as the children called them. We had no assembly hall in the school so this medium served its purpose. A noisy line would be immediately in perfect order when she made her appearance.

Papa had seen this the day he brought me to school and had said, "Wonderful! Wonderful!"

During one of her "lectures," following a recess period, while we all stood in line, ready for the signal to march in, the principal said, "Let me have your attention, children. I have been hearing some of you children referring to those things," and she pointed to the large containers, "as 'garbage cans.' Beginning as of today, as of right now, I do not want to hear that again. You are to call them 'civic pride cans.'"

There was not even a giggle because one just did not giggle when Miss Costello spoke.

And this was the teacher to whose room I was to go, interrupt her, and show her my pinafore. Timidly I went. Timidly I told her why I was sent to her. Timidly I showed her my pinafore.

"I have heard of the fine work you are doing," she said, "not only in sewing but in everything. And I understand you don't even have to stay after school anymore for arithmetic."

Then she asked me to show my pinafore to her class. "Next time you go to see your mother," she added, "be sure to take your pinafore with you. I am sure she will be very proud of you when she sees it."

"How did she know about Mother?" I thought. Then I was not afraid of her anymore. She looked so different when she was not "lecturing." I thought she was a very nice person.

I returned to my room less timidly than I had left. Both Miss Pedersen and the sewing teacher turned around and looked at me, smiling. I could smile back now. "She liked it very much," I said to them, and thought to myself, "and I liked her very much."

For our cooking lesson we went to the Winship school which was about a twenty-minute walk from the Mary Lyon School. The class had been there before, of course, but it was the first time for me. The cooking teacher, Miss Cunningham, took attendance.

"Any new pupils today?" she asked. I raised my hand.

"What is your name?"

"Lydia Bagdikian."

"That sounds like a difficult name," she said.

"No one can say it except Miss Pedersen," I said.

I was getting really brave. Generally, I just answered teachers when they asked questions. Why I had said what I just did I don't know, unless it was because I did not expect people ever to be able to say the name, although I, myself, always thought it was easier to say than "Susquehanna" and "Worcester," "Schenectady," and even "Massachusetts."

"How can they say Worcester for 'W-o-r-c-e-s-t-e-r,' I thought, "and 'Connecticut' for 'Con-nec-ti-cut,' but not 'Bagdikian'?"

The next time we visited, I asked Mother.

"If there were enough people named 'Bagdikian' or if there were a city or state named 'Bagdikian,' everyone would then learn how to

say it," she replied.

I was thinking of all this when Miss Cunningham said ,
"Bagdikian, Bagdikian," looking at the card I carefully gave her that Miss Pedersen had sent.

"Well, I guess that's not so hard when one sees the spelling," she said, a little huffy, as if Miss Pedersen was not the only one who could say it.

"For our lesson today," she began, "we will cook macaroni."

The girl next to me showed me where I could find all the utensils. Miss Cunningham passed us all some macaroni, instructing us to break it into short lengths, about two inches long.

My cooking partner, the girl who shared the cooking desk unit with me, had beautiful, blonde hair. When I had first seen her the day I entered school, she was sitting at the front of the room and from my seat in the back of the room, looking at the back of her head, I noticed this beautiful crown of blond hair. "She must be beautiful," I thought to myself. Then when the teacher introduced me to the class and she turned around to look at me, I was shocked. She was one of the homeliest girls I had ever seen!

She had a very large mouth, wide nostrils, small eyes, and she wore thick-lensed glasses. I could not take my eyes off her until I realized all eyes were on me. I smiled back as a response to the teacher's introduction. Because my eyes were focused on this girl, when I smiled, she must have thought that my smile was directed to her. At least that's what I thought, because she befriended me immediately. And now she was my cooking partner. She was showing me where I could find the measuring cups, the spoons, and the cooking kit in the drawer of the table we shared.

When the teacher asked us to break the macaroni in lengths of about two inches, Mary opened the drawer again but did not seem to find what she wanted. Finally, she raised her hand.

"What is it, Mary?" Miss Cunningham asked.

"I can't find a ruler," she replied.

"Why do you need a ruler?"

"Didn't you say to break the macaroni to about two inches?" Mary asked.

I wanted to laugh but thought that would be unkind since she had been so nice to me. Some of the girls giggled, but when Miss Cunningham laughed, everyone laughed, even I.

"I must remember this," I thought, because I wanted to tell Mother about it. I thought I should tell her something that would make her laugh. I remembered when we had left her, there were tears in her eyes.

I felt very much at home during my next cooking lesson. I could light the gas stove with the greatest ease. Some of the girls had never even lighted one.

"My mother won't let me get near the stove," Mary said. "Does your mother let you?"

"Yes," I replied, but wishing I had a mother at home who would not let me do it. I thought I would not care what she made me do or not do, if only she was home, just so I could say like the other children, "My mother said this or my mother said that." I used to imagine that I would run home from school and joyfully enter the house and call, "Mother, I'm home," and there she would be, like other mothers, greeting the children when they came home. How I prayed for that day.

"I won't be impatient, dear God," I would pray, "if you can just send me a message somehow that you will make this happen."

Often, I forgot I was in a cooking class. My thoughts had wandered when Mary asked that question. I was thinking of what Mrs. Deah had said one day.

I had heard Mrs. Deah saying that when she was troubled, she would pick up the Bible and at random, open to a page and point to a verse. "That would be the answer from God," she had said.

One day when I was wondering when Mother would come home, I opened the big Bible Papa had on his desk, and pointed my finger at a verse, and with baited breath, as if my whole future was now unfolding, I looked at the verse. "Not my will but Thine be done," I had read.

Suddenly, I was back in the cooking class. The teacher was asking what another name was for yeast. Not a single hand was up. Bashfully, I raised my hand.

"Well," she said, "I am glad to see one hand," and then she called on me. Timidly, I replied, "leaven," a word I had not yet heard in this country and not at all sure that I was giving the right answer.

"That's right," the teacher said enthusiastically.

That evening when I told Papa about it, he was pleased.

"You knew the answer because you know the Bible," he said, and then added, "Didn't even one other person know that word? Too bad. Too bad."

On our next visit to Mother I told her about Mary. I described her. I told of her beautiful hair. Then I told of her homely features. I said how nice she was to me. Then I told her about the ruler Mary had wanted to measure the macaroni.

Mother laughed at the macaroni story. "That really is amusing. I would have laughed too if I had been in that class. But, dear," she continued, "you should not laugh because she is homely. God tries to make everyone look different. If He did not, so many people would look alike and what would happen if even their families could not tell them, apart? To make them look different, God gives them different features. I think it is wonderful that God can make a billion people and make them all look different. Could you draw pictures of a billion people and make them all look different?"

But then she added, "It's all right to laugh at what people do, but it is not kind to laugh at something that God has given them. Even if God does not give everyone the best features, he generally gives them something that is nice. I am glad Mary has such beautiful hair."

On the way home from Rutland, I looked at everyone on the bus, everyone on the train. No one looked alike. When we arrived in South Station, I looked at the hundreds of people there, too, and there was a very homely woman waiting at the gate.

"Oh, how homely she is," I thought, then stopped, remembering what Mother had said. Then I saw the woman waving at someone who was coming to meet her. Then she smiled. "What beautiful teeth she has," I thought, and was glad God had given her something beautiful too.

As soon as we arrived home, I went to Papa's desk. I tried to draw pictures of people. I found it very difficult to do. I was not at

all good at drawing in school. It was my poorest subject. Once I had drawn an "axial balance," the teacher had asked the class to do. She had said mine was good. But I still did not know what it was or why it was good. I had just drawn it because she had told us how to do it. Ernest could draw pictures of people. That's one thing he could do well. I had tried it but could not do it at all. I just had no sense of perspective, although at the time, I did not even know what was meant by perspective. Now I was trying to draw features and make them all different. I could make two or three look different, but if I had to draw hundreds, thousands, millions, or a billion people—as many people as there were in the world — I could never do it.

"I guess God is really good at drawing," I thought and gave up.

Schools closed for the Christmas vacation. Papa said Mother wanted us to have a Christmas tree. He selected me to go to Boston with him to buy Christmas decorations. Tirzah seldom went shopping because she was too busy at home. When we reached Park Street subway, Papa said, "We'll get off here," and started out. I had to run to keep up with his fast walking pace. Everywhere people seemed to be pushing one another. I lost Papa in the crowd. I waited for half an hour but he did not come. I saw a man in a conductor's uniform so I told him I had lost my father in the crowd and wanted to go home. He asked me where I lived. He told me which car to take to get home. As soon as the car passed St. Elizabeth's Hospital, I knew that I should watch for landmarks near Oak Square so I would get off at the right stop.

Tirzah was surprised to see me home so soon.

"What happened?"

"I got lost, so I came home."

"Now Papa will worry about you," she said

"If he does, he will telephone," I answered.

"Bring in the clothes from the line."

I did not mind bringing them in so much as hanging them, but when I came in with them, I said, "If I had not come back, who would have brought them in?" Even before she could answer, I answered my own question. "I suppose I would have done it after I came back!" and then mumbled again that it was tough to be

neither the oldest nor the youngest.

A few hours later Papa came, laden with bundles.

"You walked so fast, that I lost you, and there were so many people," I said, "so I came home."

"I thought that's what happened," he replied. "I knew you would know what to do, so I went ahead with my shopping."

"I thought you would telephone to see if I got home," I said.

"I was so sure you would that I did not stop to do it," he said.

"Ah, well, then, whenever I need new clothes, I'll go to Boston all by myself," I said, "and I will not let Mrs. Deah or the other ladies buy my clothes anymore."

"Well, I guess you can," Papa replied, and from that day on I did.

December 13 was Mother's birthday. How we wished we could be with her that day, but it was in the middle of the week, a Tuesday, so we could not. She had said we could combine her birthday and Christmas with one visit to her so that the following Saturday which was also the Saturday before Christmas Papa took us to see her. He would be too busy with Church work during the Christmas season, Mother had said.

"Ben Hur looks so grown up," was the first thing Mother said when she saw us all. We all tried to talk at the same time. We had so much to say. We had gifts for her. She surprised us with gifts for us.

"How could you do your shopping?" we asked, amazed.

"The nurses have been very thoughtful. Whenever they have time off and go to their homes or in town to shop, they always ask if there is anything they can do for us. I didn't want to bother them too much so asked them to get one little thing at a time. The gifts are not much but the love that goes with each one is greater than I can express," she said, her voice a little shaky, and her eyes a little misty.

"What thoughtful gifts," we cried.

Mine was a music book and also the piece "Traumerei" by Schumann. On this she had written, "Very sweet, just like you." It was the loveliest Christmas gift I had ever received.

She asked Father to find a piano teacher so we could all take lessons. He promised her that right after Christmas he would do it.

She said we would have a triple celebration during our visit with her that day, since her birthday, Christmas, and Cynthia's and my birthday were so close together.

For our birthdays, she had written a poem for Cynthia and one for me.

"Maybe you will be home for Ben Hur's birthday," Cynthia said, hopefully.

"Not this year," Mother replied, "but with the help of God, maybe He will send me home for his second birthday."

It was Sunday, January 30, Ben Hur's first birthday. How we had hoped we could all have been with Mother today but Sunday was too busy a day for Papa to get away. We had planned to go the day before and surprise Mother but Ben Hur had a fever and Papa had to call the doctor. The doctor said his tonsils should come out. We did not want Mother to know about this. Tirzah had made a birthday cake. We saved it for the evening because Papa would be busy all day. He had a few pastoral calls to make after the services because Mrs. Deah had told him of two sick people who expected him to visit them that day.

We were afraid Ben Hur would fall asleep before Papa came home so tried to keep him awake by playing the piano. We had just discovered a gadget on the piano which would make it sound as if there was a ukelele being played in addition to the piano sound. We were all sure Ben Hur noticed this difference. We would play the rollers without the ukelele sound, and then we would press the button that would make it sound like a ukelele. He would notice it immediately. We thought he must be a brilliant child to notice this.

When Papa finally came home we brought out Ben Hur's birthday cake with one blue candle on it. Blue was Mother's favorite color. We tried to show Ben Hur how to blow out the candle. We all made believe he did, but we all know Nora "helped" him. We had presents for him and held his little hands, again making believe he was opening his own packages. There was a gift from Mother, and a letter.

The letter was "To Ben Hur Whose Mother Is Away for A While but To Whom God has Given Four Nice Sisters and a Dear Father to Take Care of Him."

When we began to read this, it seemed each one was making an excuse to get something she had forgotten. Each one came back hiding a handkerchief. We held Ben Hur's little hand to help him cut his cake. Papa had brought ice cream so we had our ice cream and cake.

Soon Ben Hur was falling asleep so Papa said we would have our family prayer before we all went to bed. We listened to every word Papa said. He asked God to be with our dear Mother and prayed that she might be home by his second birthday.

"Wouldn't He be cruel if He didn't," I thought, then I remembered He could hear everything everyone was thinking.

Then I thought of the Bible passage I had opened at random—"Not My Will but Thine be done." When I went to bed I said my own prayer, asking Him to please let Mother come home by Ben Hur's second birthday and promising that I would never, never think Him cruel again. Then I prayed that if I was not praying right, maybe He would help me, that no matter what I said, I really meant well.

Soon I fell asleep, confident that if He really knew everything everybody said and thought, He must know that I really meant well and was really trying to be good.

Miss Mason was our piano teacher. On her first call, she was surprised to find there would be four pupils in one house. She did not know, she said, how she could arrange to give four hours all in one afternoon. Schools closed at 3:30 and the earliest we could begin would be at four. Papa compromised with her so that we each had half an hour's lesson. Tirzah and I had very little time to practice. Papa had to make out a rigid schedule so that we would not all be at the piano at the same time.

Nora was the only one who had to be reminded to practice. One day she could not even be found when it was time for her lesson, so Papa rationalized by saying maybe she was too young, that she could begin next year. After she was told she did not have to take lessons, she was at the piano whenever someone else wanted to practice. She showed promise of becoming a good pianist, so Papa said I was to teach her what I learned. So I learned to play by

teaching her. Nora would memorize all the pieces better than I could.

Miss Mason said it was not important to memorize. She emphasized speed and limbering up the fingers. One of our assignments was to play seven hundred notes a minute. She said as soon as I could do that, she would let me play "Traumerai." I worked hard for this goal and one day I played 728 notes a minute. Papa was pleased to report to Mother that the player piano was being used less and less.

Whenever we had company Papa would show us off. Although we had to play our favorite pieces, we always ended playing hymns because after the hymns, Papa would say a prayer before the company left. I was glad I had learned to play most of the hymns because one day at Sunday School in Dr. Mulnix's church, the Superintendent announced that the girl who played the piano for the Sunday School was absent and he hoped someone would volunteer to play it that day. I was horrified to see Nora's hand go up, but horrified even more when she gave my name as one who could play hymns.

Timidly I went to the piano and timidly I played. The only reason I think I was able to do it was because I knew it would please Mother when I wrote to her about it. God must have been in Sunday School that day, I thought, because the hymns that were chosen had flats instead of sharps. But somehow, I don't know why, I could play music with flats better than music with sharps.



CHAPTER 23

*An Eleven-Year-Old
Shopper*

Somehow we had managed to study, work, and live through our first winter. Now it was glorious spring. Easter, too, had come and gone. Mrs. Deah and some of the other ladies of the church offered to help us buy our Easter clothes. We made Papa promise that he would tell them to wait until we let them know when we could go. In the meantime, we held a council of war and decided we did not want them to buy our clothes anymore. Mother had said I could do it. "I know how to go to Boston," I told Papa.

So one Saturday I took the streetcar in Oak Square and got off at Park Street subway. I found Jordan Marsh Company, and Filene's and Gilchrist's. These stores were all near one another. I even went to Houghton & Dutton's which was a little farther away. I came back to Jordan's. I looked at the price tags. Papa had given me quite a bit of money as we did not have a charge account. I had heard Mrs. Deah say things were cheaper in the basement, so I went there.

When the ladies had bought our clothes, they had bought dresses alike for Cynthia, Nora, and me. This time I wanted to buy each one something different. I started to look through the racks.

"Where's your mother?" I heard someone say.

"How can anyone tell her mother is away?" I thought.

It was the saleslady. "Where's your mother?" she asked again.

If she had not smiled while she said it, I am sure I would have cried.

"She is in the hospital," I replied.

"Who brought you to shop?"

"I came by myself," I replied. "We don't want the old ladies to buy our clothes, so I came before they had a chance."

"Come here, Mabel," the saleslady told another lady. Soon several sales ladies came. The first sales lady asked me where I lived.

"In Brighton."

"Did you come to Boston all by yourself?" another asked.

"Yes," I said, "it's easy. I just took one streetcar, got off at Park Street, and walked to Jordan's."

"What hospital is your mother in?" the first saleslady asked again.

"In Rutland," I said. I thought she did not understand, so added, "Rutland Sanatorium."

They looked at one another and then the first saleslady asked again,

"How long has she been there?"

"Since September 17. We want to go to see her on Mother's Day and we want to wear new dresses when we go to see her."

"How many in your family," one of the salesladies asked.

"My mother and father," I said, "and Tirzah, Cynthia, Nora, and Ben Hur, and I am Lydia."

"Ben Hur?"

"He's my baby brother, and Tirzah is the oldest one."

Then I saw there was a man among them, and I saw one of the ladies motioning with her finger to another lady to come. I had quite an audience and suddenly became self-conscious.

"Now, dear," said the first saleslady, "what old ladies don't you want buying your clothes?"

"The old ladies, well, they're not all old, but we don't like the clothes they buy for us, the old ladies from the church."

"What church?"

"My father's church," I replied.

"Your father's church?" the man asked. "What does your father do?"

"He is a minister."

"Oh," the first lady said. "Your father is a minister, your mother is

in the hospital, and you don't want the old, the church ladies, to buy your clothes, is that right, dear?"

"Yes," I said. "I want to buy four dresses and a romper for Ben Hur."

"What an unusual name!" one of the ladies said.

"That is from the book Ben Hur," I told her, "and in the book Ben Hur's sister was Tirzah, and Tirzah is the oldest girl in our family."

"How old is Tirzah? How old is Ben Hur?" Everyone began to ask questions at once

"Tirzah is thirteen years old and Ben Hur is one," I began to reply and found several more people had been added to my audience.

"Why did Theresa..."

"Tirzah," I corrected her.

"Why didn't Tirzah come to shop with you?" the first lady asked.

"She is the oldest and she does the cooking. We can't both go out at the same time because Cynthia and Nora are too young to stay with Ben Hur."

Suddenly, I felt bashful and wished I had done all the shopping and were on my way home. Hoping to be relieved of further questions, I asked, "Have you any blue dresses? I would like a blue dress for myself, a gray dress for Tirzah, a green dress for Cynthia, and a red dress for Nora. And blue rompers for Ben Hur."

"We'll see what we can do for you," the first lady said, "and after you find the dresses you want, I'll have someone take you to another department to get the rompers for, for Ben... Ben Hur."

"When this young lady has finished her shopping, call me," the man told my saleslady. "And Sadie," he told another one, "why don't you bring a few rompers here from the Infant Department and let the young lady select one for Ben Hur."

Then to me he said, "If you will give me your father's full name, address, and the name and address of his church, maybe I can be of some help."

I did not know what he meant by that, but I gave Papa's full name. When I came to "Bagdikian," I pronounced it slowly, then spelled it, and then added, "No one can pronounce that name." The man wrote it and looked at it, and pronounced it correctly.

Whenever I say no one can pronounce it, I thought, then they seem to be able to.

"Call me before you make out the sales slip," the man told my sales lady, and left.

We looked through all the racks. I had to get Cynthia the blue dress and myself a royal blue because the sizes they had were reversed. For Tirzah I had to get a green dress, but I did find a red one for Nora. I then described the sizes and heights of Tirzah, Nora, and Cynthia. I was able to try on the dresses. The saleswoman called some of the others to say how nice I looked in mine.

The lady who went to get the rompers brought several. The prettiest one was a yellow one but I knew how fond Mother was of blue so bought the blue one.

"How much money do you have with you?" the saleslady asked.

I put my hands in my coat pocket, undid the safety pins and took out a roll of bills from inside a handkerchief. I handed the whole thing to the saleslady. She opened her eyes wide.

"Fifty dollars," she said, half talking to herself. "That's too much money for a little girl like you to carry."

"That's why Tirzah pinned it, so I wouldn't drop it," I said.

"Now, you wait here till I call the floor manager," she said, and went to look for him, taking my money and the dresses with her.

"What if she doesn't come back?" I thought, then began to worry not only about that but about whether or not the girls would like the dresses I bought for them. "Well, anyway, Mother will like the blue rompers."

Then I noticed several of the salesladies watching me, and when I looked at them, they waved and smiled. Then I felt sure that the dresses I had bought and the money I gave the saleslady would be safe. Soon I saw her coming toward me, bringing two boxes, and the manager.

"Young lady," he said, "here is your change. You can take some of the money back to your father. I'm sure he can use it. Tell him Jordan Marsh Company gives discounts to ministers. And tell him it is not safe for little girls to carry so much money."

"My father gave it to me himself," I said, in case he might think I

took it without his permission, "and it was pinned to my pocket."

I put the change in my handkerchief and then pulled my pocket inside out, rolled the handkerchief with the money inside, and pinned it to the lining of the pocket.

"I guess you're all set now," the saleslady said, handing me the two boxes. When I held them, they seemed to cover my face and I had to peer through them.

"Wait," she said, "I better put some handles on them, otherwise you can't see where you are going."

She came back with two wooden handles which she wound deftly around the string on the boxes. With a box in each hand, I left the store. All the salesladies waved goodbye. I waved back one of the boxes.

Nora was waiting at the car line.

"Mrs. Deekins came right after you left," she said excitedly.

Mrs. Deekins was another of the helpful ladies in the church. We had named her Mrs. Deekins because every time anyone said anything to her, she would say, "Oh, the Dickens," but she pronounced it, "Deekins."

"What does Mrs. Deekins want?" I asked.

"She wanted to go to the store with you to buy the dresses. Tirzah told her you had already gone but she didn't believe it."

"Is Papa at home?" I asked, hoping he was there to smooth things with Mrs. Deekins.

As we approached the house, Nora asked, "Which box has my dress? And what color is it?"

"It's red," I replied, "and I don't know in which one it is."

Nora grabbed both boxes and ran in the house ahead of me.

"Here are the dresses," I heard her announce triumphantly, tearing the boxes open.

Tirzah took the boxes away from her and said, "Go wash your hands."

She was about to close the boxes when Mrs. Deekins said she wanted to see the dresses I had bought. Nora teased that she wanted to see her dress. Tirzah politely opened the boxes and took out all four dresses and Ben Hur's rompers.

"You try them on," Mrs. Deekins commanded.

It was unthinkable for us to disobey a grownup, so we each took our dresses to go to the bedroom to change. Cynthia, however, was nowhere in sight but Nora found her. She said she liked the dress so did not see why she should try it.

"I want to see it on you," Mrs. Deekins said a little harshly.

Even Tirzah had put aside her work to try on her dress for Mrs. Deekins.

Mrs. Deekins waited until we had all put on the new dresses, then asked Tirzah to put on Ben Hur's rompers. When the five models were ready for her inspection, she made us walk around the kitchen. She did not say anything. I thought she did not like them.

"I like mine," Nora said. Tirzah and Cynthia, more polite, did not say anything. Ben Hur seemed to enjoy the game, holding on to Tirzah and me while we walked him around the room. Mrs. Deekins looked at us some more.

"Don't you like them?" Nora asked.

"The Deekins," Mrs. Deekins said, "you did all right, Leedia. I think when you grow up, you might be a dress buyer."

"I think Mrs. Deekins is very nice," I said after she left.

We could not go to see Mother with our new dresses. We had hoped to go on Mother's Day but Nora was very sick, lying quietly in a very dark room with all the shades drawn. She had a severe case of the measles. She had measles before but this is the first time it had really made her seriously ill. The house seemed so gloomy. We were quarantined. Papa was the only one who left the house.

Ben Hur was the only one who caught it. We all had it before but were afraid we, too, might catch it a second time. Ben Hur soon recovered but Nora was very ill for a very long time. When finally she was well enough to go to school again, the doctor said she would need to wear glasses for probably a whole year, since her eyes had become weakened from the illness. We had tried to keep all this from Mother and felt she would not suspect anything was wrong if we kept writing to her about pleasant things. She knew Sunday was a very busy day for Papa, therefore we were sure we had been successful in keeping this bit of bad news from her.

A few days after we were all back in school and Nora had regained her vim and vivacity, Papa received a letter from Mother. Sometimes she wrote to him in English, when she wanted him to show us the letters, and sometimes she wrote to him in Armenian. We had come to place a significance on this. It was either good news and there was nothing to hide from us when the letters from her were in English. But if it was in Armenian, it was either bad news or there was a surprise for us which he had to keep. However, no matter in which language she wrote to him, her letters always began in English—"MMPA." They always ended "YMDD." Papa's letters to Mother always began "MMPD" and ended, "YMDA."

Ever since we could remember, we had teased them to divulge this mystery. Mother had promised that someday she would but that we would have to wait for her to tell us when. They had used this salutation and complimentary close ever since they were engaged.

The letter that came today began as usual—"MMPA." The rest was in Armenian. We teased Papa to please tell us what Mother had written. Was it bad news? We were concerned and worried.

To allay our fears. Papa said, "No bad news, but maybe we should not hide anything from Mother. She said in her letter, 'I am so glad to know Nora has recovered from the measles and all the children are back in school. Thank God that Ben Hur's was a mild case.'"

"Who told her?" we chorused angrily.

"It does not matter," Papa replied. "Whoever it was, meant well." But the real bad news came later.

May 17 was Tirzah's birthday. We had planned to celebrate it in combination with Mother's Day, if we visited Mother that day. Because of Nora's illness, we had to forego this plan also. Without Tirzah's knowledge, we elicited a promise from Papa that he would be home for supper on her birthday. Since it was a Tuesday, he promised he would, provided we would let him leave by 7:30, since Tuesday night was prayer meeting at church.

Cynthia, Nora, and I, our newly organized triumvirate for this occasion, decided it was impossible to make a birthday cake for Tirzah without her knowledge. She was supreme ruler of the kitchen. We therefore ordered a birthday cake with fourteen

candles—she was getting really old!

Even Nora guarded our secret well. When the table was being cleared in readiness for dessert, Nora jumped up from the table.

"You know you can't leave before we are through," Tirzah told her. "We have tapioca pudding for dessert."

"You must have had that in cooking school," Cynthia said.

"Everything you learn in school you try on us," Nora said, "and I don't want any."

"Well, then, just sit down and watch us eat," Tirzah said.

Papa said, "If you will promise to mail a letter for me right away, and get back in time to have your dessert, you may leave. Otherwise you may not." We all saw him wink at her, while Tirzah left the table to get the dessert. Ben Hur, gurgling happily, tried to jump out of his high chair to follow Nora. Since Tirzah could not countermand Papa's orders, Nora left. She was back before the tapioca pudding was on the table. As soon as she returned, trying to hide a quart of ice cream, she shouted from the back door, "I mailed your letter, Papa."

With this cue, I left the table, saying, "Oh, Papa, I forgot to give you a letter that came from Mother."

"How could you forget such a thing!" Tirzah said in astonishment.

There really was a letter from Mother. I had hidden it under the cake box in the closet in the main hallway. Quickly I took the cake from the box, lit the candles, and walked in singing, "Happy Birthday to you." The others joined me.

"How could you keep this a secret from me?" Tirzah said. A few tears rolled from her eyes. Quickly, she opened the letter from Mother. It was a poem for her. She read it with difficulty, her voice quivering.

Nora broke the tension with, "Don't forget the ice cream I brought. Save the tapioca pudding for tomorrow—and my birthday is next."

A few weeks before school closed was Nora's birthday, June 7. The kewpie doll we had bought just a year ago in New York at her birthday party was sharing Ben Hur's high chair.

There was a poem from Mother for her also, with an encouraging note that God willing maybe she would be with her dear ones on future birthdays.

"If only she could be home on Ben Hur's second birthday," Papa said.

That seemed such a long time, we all said. The next birthday would be Papa's—August 15. And the birthday after that would be Mother's—December 13. Then would be Cynthia's and mine again, and then Ben Hur's.

"Why don't you think she will be home on your birthday?" Cynthia asked.

"Did the doctors say it would be that long?" I added.

"Maybe the doctors don't know," Nora insisted.

Tirzah did not ask any questions, therefore we thought she must know what Papa knows.

"The doctors often know," Papa said, "but only God really knows. We must be patient."

I said, "There is a place in the Bible that says we need patience."

"How do you know?" Nora asked.

"I saw it once and I marked it in the Bible I won in Sunday School," I said with pride.

I had received a Bible that had my name in gold letters. It was for perfect attendance and also because I had memorized the Ten Commandments, the Twenty-Third Psalm, the Beatitudes, and I Corinthians, 13th Chapter. I had started to emulate Mother by reading the Bible from cover to cover. There was so much I could not understand. But I remembered reading, "For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

First, I had wondered what the will of God was. I assumed that meant to make Mother well and "Ye might receive the promise" meant the promise to send her home. For "he that shall come will come," I had substituted "she that shall come will come." I had looked up the word "tarry" in the dictionary. It said, "to stay behind...to live in a place for a time."

"It must mean Mother staying in the hospital for a time," I thought. What I was supposed to do "to do the will of God" I could not understand. I had wanted to ask Papa when nobody was around because everyone said I asked too many questions. I had retorted that Mother said that was the way to learn, by asking questions, as she had when she read us the lines about "six honest serving-men" from Kipling's, "The Elephant's Child."

Somehow I had never had a chance to ask about "the will of God." I had so many questions to ask that I just underlined the verses I wanted to ask about. I had overheard an adult say once that she liked to read books that were marked all over. I imagined that some day I would be all alone with Mother and would ask her all the questions my head was filled with.

I was still turning the pages of my Bible, looking for that passage about patience, when Papa said, "Tenth chapter of Hebrews."

Yes, there it was, I had marked the 36th and 37th verses.

"How did you know?" I asked Papa in surprise. "Is it because you are a minister?"

"Mother knows the Bible better than I," he said, "and she is not a minister. It is because she reads it faithfully. It is a great source of comfort."

"What is the will of God?" I began to ask, thinking here was my chance.

But again I was interrupted. The doorbell was ringing. Nora's many playmates had known it was her birthday. Nora had told them, "I'll have a birthday cake and ice cream." Papa was happiest when the house was full of people, especially children. Papa had said we could bring anyone home we wanted, "if they are good children. If they are not good, you can teach them to be good, by your example."

"Gee, your dad is swell," the kids used to say. "He never tells us to go home like a lot of the other fathers. He always says 'Come again.'"

Maybe it was a coincidence that so many of Nora's friends happened to be at the door at the same time.

"Suffer little children to come unto us," Papa said, smiling, as he saw the children waiting in line for ice cream and cake.

And so another question popped into my head. "I wonder what it means by 'suffer little children'?" Now I had another question unanswered.

It was the last day of school in June. Like the other children, I had worn my "party dress" that Mrs. Roubian had made. It was white, with short scalloped sleeves and a scalloped hem. The scalloped edges were embroidered in blue. The sash was a blue ribbon which matched the ribbon I was wearing in my hair. I was so proud of this dress and expected all the girls to say how beautiful it was. My expectations were more than fulfilled. Even Miss Pedersen said "What a lovely dress," and I was almost sure she had smiled. Of course, Ernest liked it too. "A cute dress for a cutie," he said, pulling my curls.

Today even the boys were dressed in their best clothes. Ernest had a new suit, but then he always was the best dressed boy in school.

After our end-of-the-year party, we said goodbye to Miss Pedersen. The children were telling her and one another what they were going to do for the summer. Some were going to the beach, others to Maine or New Hampshire. I did not know where Maine or New Hampshire were except on the map. Miss Pedersen asked me what I was going to do during the summer.

Papa had said he wanted us to spend the summer on a farm but as yet he did not know where. Mrs. Warren, a social worker from the Home Missionary Society, was going to help Papa find a place for us.

"You are always helping the families in your church," Mrs. Warren said to Papa one evening when she called on him about a woman who had lost her husband and was left with two children. "But you must not forget your own children. They should get away for the summer — on a farm where they could be outdoors, with no housework to do all summer. I'll find a place for them."

"I think I am going to a farm," I told Miss Pedersen.

"You'll be a cute farmerette," I heard Ernest's voice.

"You stop teasing her," Miss Pedersen cautioned him, and to me she said, "If you will try hard next fall they might send you to the Winship School, in Miss Keenan's room. Ernest won't be there to bother you."

I didn't know quite what she meant and I was too bashful to ask her. My report card said I had been promoted to grade six. There were two portable rooms in the yard of the Mary Lyon school that housed the sixth grade classes. The Winship School housed grades seven and eight.

When I arrived home, Cynthia was already there, waving her report card. She would be in the fifth grade next year. She had been given a double promotion.

"What about you?" Papa asked when I arrived home. "Did you get a double promotion, too?"

"No," I said. I wanted to tell him what Miss Pedersen had said but I thought I had better not. Supposing I had misunderstood her. Tirzah and Nora had been promoted too. Cynthia was the only one who had a double promotion.

Papa was disappointed that all of us were not given a double promotion.

"Now it won't be right," he said. "There should be two grades between each one because there is a difference of two years in age."

Just then Mrs. Shilian came in. She had a habit of walking in without knocking.

"Priscilla tells me..." she began.

"Yes," Papa interrupted proudly, "Cynthia was given a double promotion."

"Well, she is older than Priscilla by several months," she said, adding, "What about the other girls? Did they get double promotions?"

"Not yet," Papa replied, "next year, I am sure."

Again, I was tempted to tell what Miss Pedersen said. "I will wait," I thought to myself, "and when it really happens, I will just say the first morning that I must leave earlier because I have a longer walk. Then everyone will say, 'The distance is the same today as it

was yesterday." Then I will say, "No, today it is longer." Then someone will say, "Either you are crazy or you are going to school by way of Thompson's Hill." Then I'll say, "I can prove that the Winship School is farther than the Mary Lyon School!" Then everyone will say, "The Winship School?" Then the bombshell will come, I kept imagining, when I tell them—casually, of course—that I was now in the seventh grade.

Mrs. Shilian was talking to me. "Didn't you get a good report card?" she was asking?

"Yes," I said, but didn't want to show it to her. I thought to myself—just in case I get my double promotion, too, later.

"Let me see it," she said.

Now Papa wanted to see it too. I had been so glad he had forgotten to ask for it, even though I was so proud of that "A" in arithmetic. I knew he would be proud of it too because he had helped me to catch up with the class not only because I had begun the school year a month late but also because I had never had arithmetic before. Even though his methods were "old fashioned." So many times, I had told him, "That's not the way the teacher showed us," but the answers always came out the same.

"'A' in arithmetic! Bravo!" Papa was saying, "You should have had a double promotion too!"

"But some others in the class had 'A' in arithmetic, too," I said, "and they didn't get double promotions." I almost added, "but maybe I will later," then I thought, "but what if I don't?"

"My teacher said I was not old enough to get a double promotion and nobody else in my room got a double promotion, and two kids did not even get promoted at all," Nora called out, as she quickly left her report card on the table and ran out to play.

"Now that school is closed, we won't have to take Ben Hur to Mrs. U's all summer," Tirzah said.

That reminded Mrs. Shilian that she had something at home on the stove. After she left, Papa said he had a surprise for us.

"We're going to see Mother!" I said.

"Mother is coming home?" Cynthia asked.

"I wish that were the surprise," Papa said, "But this surprise is for

Lydia, Cynthia, and Nora."

Whenever Papa was naming us or addressing us, it was always in chronological order.

"Where is Nora?" he asked. Papa always looked at people when he was talking to them. "Call her," he said to Cynthia, and Cynthia dashed out to get her. When Papa had news, we all had to be present. It was like meal time. We could never begin unless everyone was at the table.

"What's the surprise?" Nora asked as she ran in.

"Mrs. Warren has found a nice farm for you, Lydia, and you, Cynthia, and you, Nora, for the summer. She thinks you are all too thin. You will get plenty of fresh air and sunshine and good food on the farm."

"What about Tirzah, and Ben Hur, and you?" I asked. "Don't you need sunshine and fresh air?"

"We three are not thin," Tirzah laughed. She was fourteen now and was beginning to fill out. And Ben Hur? "The Mellon's Food baby" someone had called him because he looked almost like the picture of the baby on the Mellon's Food can. He was just chubby enough and yet not too chubby. And Papa looked just right, neither fat nor thin.

"I'm fat," Nora said, puffing her cheeks.

"What did you say?" Papa asked, but when Nora began to answer, her "fat" cheeks disappeared.

"Why don't you want to go?" Papa asked.

"I want to stay home and play with the kids," Nora replied.

"Maybe there will be real kids on the farm," Tirzah replied.

"What are real kids?" Nora asked.

"Goats," Cynthia replied.

"Yes," Papa said, "like the goats Lydia and Cynthia had once, but you must not ride them, Cynthia," he warned, "if there are any on the farm."

"Or they will all be lame goats," I added.

"Before you go to New Hampshire..." Papa started to say.

"New Hampshire?" I asked.

"Yes," Papa replied, "Londonderry, New Hampshire. That's where

the farm is."

"I wish I had known," I said.

"Why? What difference would that have made?" Tirzah asked me.

"Some children in my room are going to New Hampshire. I could have said I was going, too."

"Londonderry, New Hampshire?" Tirzah asked.

"I don't know," I said.

"Well, New Hampshire is a big place, so it wouldn't have made any difference. You probably won't see them there."

"That's not why I wished I knew," I said.

"Well then, why?"

"Oh, nothing. I just could have said I was going, too."

"To whom?" Tirzah began, but Papa resumed.

"Before you go to New Hampshire, we will all go to see Mother."

"When?" we all asked.

"Next week. First, you must prepare your clothes for your trip. You will be gone two months."

"Two months?" Cynthia said. "I don't want to go to a farm for two months."

"But everyone says it is too hot in the city during July and August," Tirzah said.

"Then why aren't you going, too?" Cynthia asked.

"Because someone has to take care of Ben Hur and Papa," Tirzah replied.

"Then why don't we all go?" Cynthia asked.

"Because Papa has work here," Tirzah said.

"He can come back on Sundays," Nora said.

"Sunday is not the only day he works," Tirzah said.

"Yes, it is," Nora insisted. "He doesn't preach on other days."

"He marries people and buries them," Tirzah reminded her.

"Well, they can just wait," Nora said and ran out to play again.

I went to Jordan Marsh Company again after Tirzah and I had made out a list of everything we would need. I was disappointed because I could not find the saleswoman who had waited on me before. If a new saleswoman waited on me, I thought, I would have to answer all those question again.

"Where is your mother, little girl? Do you always shop alone? Did you come all by yourself? Why?" I wished I knew the other saleswoman's name so I could ask for her. I had wanted to ask her name the last time but I thought it would not be polite. But she had asked my name. If it was not impolite for her to ask my name, then it would not have been impolite for me to ask her name. If it is all right for grownups to ask children questions, why shouldn't it be all right for children to ask grownups questions.

"May I help you, little girl?" someone asked.

"I brought a list," I said.

"Where is your mother? Did you come alone? How old are you?"

I wonder how old she is, I thought, and I almost asked her, but somehow I knew I should not. It would be so brave to ask a woman her age. Then it occurred to me that men did not always ask the same questions women did. And they did not ask many questions. All the way back home on the streetcar I tried to remember how many men had asked me where my mother was, or how old I was. The only men I could remember asking such questions were doctors. Every time I was examined by a doctor he would ask so many questions — where was I born, how old I was, what happened to my feet. One of the times I was examined by a doctor because my feet were beginning to hurt again, he did not ask many questions. "Why?" I wondered. He was the only doctor who did not ask any questions.

I had asked Mother why people always asked questions of little children. I told her about the many doctors I had seen whenever my feet hurt. I told her about one doctor who did not ask any questions.

"Did you like that one?" she asked.

I had not thought of this before. But now I knew.

"No. He didn't even smile or say anything."

"When people ask questions it is because they are interested. It means they like you. Some people ask many questions. Others talk about themselves."

After that I knew why I didn't mind when people asked questions—or certain types of questions.

"Oak Square," the conductor called.

I knew the next stop was mine. I began to pick up my bundles. I walked to the door. I dropped several of my bundles. A man was getting off at the same stop. He picked up my packages and helped me alight from the car.

"Can you carry all those bundles, little girl?" he asked.

"Yes, thank you," I said and dropped a few more bundles.

He picked them up and said, "Where do you live? I'll help you take them to your house."

"I live at 36 Brackett Street," I said.

"I go right by your house, so I can help you," he said, and took almost all my bundles from me.

"Did you go to Boston all by yourself?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered, remembering that Mother had said most people ask questions because they are interested.

Mother had added, "When they ask questions, they invite you to talk. You must answer them. That means they invite you to talk. That helps bashful people who find it easier to answer questions than to talk about themselves. People who never ask any questions generally just talk about themselves. Of course," she said, "I do not mean people who ask intimate questions."

"What is intimate?" I asked.

"It means confidential, which means 'secret.'"

Whenever we used to get excited on trains when Papa disappeared at a railroad station stop, Mother used to keep us busy with different games. One of them she had named "Question-Question" game. One would begin by asking a question. The point was to answer it by asking another question, keeping this up until someone forgot or was stuck and answered the question. The person who answered the question instead of thinking up another question about the question was out. (I thought of this many years later when I heard a common story about a Texan who asks a New Englander, "Why is it all New Englanders answer a question by asking another question?" and the New Englander replies, "Oh, do they?")

Mother found it necessary to make several rules after she had

made up the Question-Question game. We had to eliminate the question, "What did you say?" Once we became so involved that no one remembered what the original question was, so Mother added a rule to the game. The person who won had to remember the original question. If she could not remember it, she forfeited the title of winner. Also, no question could be asked that the questioner herself would not want to answer. When unfair or nosey or ambiguous questions were asked, the questioner could be challenged to answer it herself.

By this time, I was home and the man left the packages at the front door and said goodbye. I rang the bell. Nora got there first.

"How did you bring all those bundles?" she asked.

"A nice man helped me."

As Nora picked up some of the packages and helped me take them in, she announced, "A nice man helped Lydia bring the packages."

"How old a man?" Papa asked.

"An old man," I said.

"How old?" Papa asked, much more curiously this time.

"About thirty-five or forty," I said.

"I'll be forty in two more months," Papa said. He seemed hurt.

"Then I must be an old man, too."

"Oh, but you look much younger," we all said, as we had said many times before.

After I told about the "old" man who had helped me, I began to unpack the bundles, hoping I would be praised for my good judgment in shopping, saying, "I couldn't find the same saleswoman."

Father asked, "Did you get the discount?"

"I asked for it," I said, proudly, because I almost had not. I found it very hard to bargain. I had thought bargaining was degrading. It just happened that a fat woman was demanding her money back for an article she was returning. Because I saw her demands were met, I very meekly said, "The last time I was here, I got a discount," and added, almost in a whisper, "minister's discount."

"Why, sure, dearie," the saleslady said. "I'll fix it up for you" and went

to the cashier and brought the change, which included the discount.

"You be careful when you carry that much money with you," she said. "You really are too young to walk around town alone and carry so much money," and she patted me on the head saying, "I have a little girl just your age."

Then I heard her tell another saleswoman standing by, "I can't imagine my Jennie shopping all alone."

Then I began to have doubts in my mind. I could not tell whether she admired me for being brave and coming to Boston to shop all by myself "with all that money" or whether she disapproved. I did not tell anyone at home about this part of the conversation. I was afraid Papa would say in that case we will ask the ladies of the church to shop for us.

My purchases included sneakers for the farm. Mrs. Warner had told us we would need them. Nora tried hers.

"Mine are ten miles too big," she said.

"You're making a mountain out of a molehill," Papa said. "Do you know how long ten miles are? Farther than to Boston and back."

Papa used this expression often. The first time I heard it, I didn't understand it. Mother explained that it meant to exaggerate. I had looked up the word "molehill" in the dictionary but did not find the definition "to exaggerate," so I had asked Mother to explain. She quoted the original passage and explained its connotation. I then found myself using it, especially when I wanted to chide Cynthia or Nora at the slightest tendency to exaggerate.

Cynthia turned up her nose at the middy blouse and bloomers I had bought for her, Nora and myself.

"I won't wear anything like that," she announced.

"Mrs. Warren said that's what we should wear on the farm," I reminded her.

"You must do what Mrs. Warren says," Papa told us. "She is coming tonight to help you pack and you must do what she says."

Mrs. Warren did come and she did check everything. I was quite puffed up when she said whoever shopped did well. Papa was quick to tell her that I always went to Boston to shop for clothing. Papa also told her that he wanted us to visit Mother before we left

for New Hampshire. She said she herself would take us on the train when we were ready and hoped it would be within a week. Papa told her he would take us to see Mother on a Sunday and that we could leave the next morning.



CHAPTER 24

Vacation

I didn't have a chance to tell Mother about the new middy blouses and bloomers I had bought because Papa was telling her about Cynthia's double promotion, about the wonderful cook Tirzah was turning out to be, and about Ben's latest antics. Ben Hur seemed to know that we were all talking about him and he gurgled, jumped out of Papa's lap and began to run around the room. He was now seven months old and walked quite well. While Tirzah went to catch him Nora found a chance to tell Mother how she had chased an Irish boy and beaten him up because he had called her skinny.

"Don't exaggerate..." Papa began and Nora broke in to say, "I am not making a mountain out of a molehill." This made us all laugh.

We promised Mother we would write to her every day from Londonderry, New Hampshire. Papa promised her he would bring us all to see her again before schools opened in September.

"That is such a long time," we said, and envied Tirzah and Ben Hur. They would now be able to come with Papa each time he visited Mother because schools were closed and they would remain at home.

Mother had a map of New Hampshire and had found out just where we were going. Londonderry was northwest of Derry.

"Why is it called LONDONderry?" one of us asked.

"Many places in the United States are named after cities in England," she reminded us, "because many of the Pilgrims came from England. They left their country for reasons very much like ours—to seek life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

"Why, were there Turks in England too?" Nora asked.

"Cruelty, wickedness, and greed are not limited to certain nations," Mother replied. "Each nation, unfortunately, has its share. What makes America different is that there is less of it here. There are more good people here who want to enforce good laws. Nations are like families. Some of its members sometimes disappoint the rest of the family. If one member of the family is bad, it does not mean the whole family is bad. The good families, like good nations, try to correct the bad members when their wickedness first begins to show. A good nation has many good families. And good families have many good children. I hope my children will always be good children because you have to be good children first before you can be good Americans. When you go to New Hampshire, it will be the first time you will be away from home. I hope you will be very good children so that Mrs. Forrester will be glad she has you."

"Mrs. Forrester?"

Mother replied, "She is the lady on whose farm you will spend the summer. It will be good for you to be out in the fresh air. Maybe when you return in the fall, you will all be a little fatter. You are all too thin now."

"Except me," Tirzah replied. Tirzah was the only one who was not too thin. Everyone said she was the best looking one in the family.

"I don't want to be fat," Nora said. "The kids will call me Fatty Spilliker if I get fat."

"What is 'Spilliker?'" Papa asked.

"He's in the funnies," Cynthia told him.

Tirzah and I never had a chance to read the funnies (or go to the movies Saturday afternoon like other children) so we were not well versed in the everyday events to which the children in our neighborhood were exposed. Maybe in New Hampshire I'll have time to read the funnies too, I thought. It will really be a vacation for me.

"I won't have to do housework in New Hampshire, will I, Mother?" I asked.

"I hope you will help by making your bed and do whatever all the other children do. You won't have any responsibilities. And I

hope you will write me often because I shall be anxious to know how you like it and all about the farm. I won't see you again until you return from New Hampshire, but I am sure you will visit me by your letters."

We promised to write to Mother every day. She asked us to write to Papa and Tirzah also.

"They won't be so fortunate as you," she said. "They will be in the hot city all summer, but you can write to them so that they can enjoy the country through your letters."

Mother let us kiss her on the forehead and we promised to be good while in New Hampshire and to write to her every day.

On the way back by bus to Worcester and by train from Worcester to Boston we asked Papa many questions about the farm where we were to go the following day.

"Mrs. Warren will take you, because she knows just where it is."

"Why can't you take us?" Nora asked.

"Because I have two appointments tomorrow," Papa replied.

"I suppose a funeral or a wedding," Cynthia said.

"Yes," Papa replied, "a funeral in the afternoon and a wedding in the evening."

I had often wondered how Papa could so calmly go through the transitional period from a sad and somber affair like a funeral to a happy and gay occasion like a wedding all within a few hours. I had been to one or two funerals and it took me days and days to erase the vivid pictures I had retained in my mind but also the million questions that the hereafter stirred in my mind. The services had begun with "In my Father's House there are many mansions." This seemed contradictory to the life hereafter which I had heard so often discussed and preached about a place where food or shelter was not needed. Why, then, should there be many mansions? The body was in the grave, the spirit moved on. Did the spirit need a mansion? I just could not understand all these things. Even when I asked questions and received answers, it still seemed mysterious to me.

"Whose funeral, whose wedding?" Tirzah was asking. "Who died? Anyone young?"

"Yes," Papa said, "a young man only thirty-five years old."

Thirty-five years seemed very, very old to me, but then I remembered Mother was thirty- six, and although that seemed old in years, I shuddered at the thought of her dying.

"How old is the bride?" Tirzah asked.

"Twenty-six, I think," Papa replied.

"An old lady," Nora replied.

"You won't think so when you are twenty-six," Papa smiled.

"Only twelve years older than Tirzah," I said, forgetting the mansions and the spirits, and very proud of my arithmetic.

In the morning Mrs. Warren came for us. We kissed Ben Hur and Tirzah goodbye. Papa came to North Station with us so that he could help Mrs. Warner with our suitcases. He came on the train with us. We kissed him goodbye after he gave us advice as to how we should behave. We promised to write him as soon as we arrived. He didn't wait until the train began to move because he had an appointment elsewhere. I was relieved because he generally had to jump off the train.

This was the first time I was on a train without Mother, except the time from Adana to Tarsus when Papa could not have gone off without us because at the time Tirzah and I were unable to walk.

At North Station, we all leaned against the window waving to Papa as he walked away from the train. After the train left the station, the conductor came to collect the tickets. Mrs. Warren gave him four tickets.

"One adult and three children," she said as she handed him the tickets. After the conductor punched the tickets and left, she said,

"You are all under twelve years old, are you not?"

"I was just eight years old three weeks ago," Nora replied.

"I was ten in January and Lydia was twelve in January," Cynthia added.

"You were twelve in January?" Mrs. Warren asked, very much surprised.

"Our birthdays are on the same day," I said, wishing to surprise her even more. But she did not seem to be listening. She was calling the conductor. When the conductor came back, she said, "I am sorry, sir, I

thought all these children were under twelve. This young lady"—pointing to me—"is already twelve. I did not know. I'll pay you the difference in the fare," and she opened her pocketbook to pay him.

"Thank you, Ma'am," the conductor said, looking at me. "A real young lady she is." He winked.

When he left, Mrs. Warren explained that when she had bought the tickets she had thought we were all under twelve.

"As soon as children reach the age of twelve, they have to pay full fare."

I was disappointed that she had thought I was under twelve but glad that I was beginning to be considered a grownup.

"That's the first thing I will write to Mother," I thought. "Mother will like Mrs. Warren because she is so honest."

We got off the train at Derry. Mr. Forrest was waiting for us in an old Ford. Mrs. Warner introduced us to him and he smiled very pleasantly but stumbled on the name "Bagdikian" when he tried to repeat it.

"You can call them by their first names," Mrs. Warren said—"Lydia, Cynthia, Nora," she repeated.

Cynthia whispered, "I don't think he's very smart. He can't even say 'Bagdikian.'"

"Hush," I said, "it's not polite to whisper."

Mrs. Warner looked at Cynthia and said, "Do you have to go to the bathroom?"

Cynthia blushed, but Nora said, "That's not what she whispered. She said..."

I could not stop her!

"She said Mr. Forrest was not very smart if he couldn't say 'Bagdikian.'"

"Well, I guess I can say it," Mr. Forrest said good naturedly, and practiced it all the way home, as the Ford chugged along on rough, country roads. Mrs. Warren sat in front with him. We sat in back with the suitcases. We had to hold on to our hats each time we came to a rough spot in the road.

"Are you still there?" Mr. Forrest turned and asked when the car

almost went up in the air. The dust it raised blew into our faces.

We passed many farm houses and I began to picture what the Forrest farm would look like. I hoped there were fruit trees on the farm. Mr. Forrest blew the horn every time he saw someone on the road. They all waved and we waved back.

When we passed some children, he said, "You'll soon be playing with those kids. The cute blonde girl is Kay Harding. She lives in a big house near our farm."

She must be my age, I thought and was glad. Except at recess time in school I had not played with children ever since we left Marash because I had been in the hospital for months and then when we came to America and Mother went to the hospital, I had to help Tirzah with the house work all the time. How wonderful it will be, I thought, to have a chance to play, to climb trees, especially fruit trees.

"Well, here we are," Mr. Forrest said, as he turned in a long driveway. Several children ran out of the house, and then a middle-aged woman, wiping her hands on her apron.

"Here they are, Mother," Mr. Forrest said.

She came to the car and helped us out. She greeted Mrs. Warren as if she already knew her. Mrs. Warren introduced us as "Lydia, Cynthia, and Nora." I think she was afraid of what Nora might say if Mrs. Forrest could not say "Bagdikian."

"Bagdikian," Mr. Forrest added. "Easy as pie when you get the hang of it," he said, winking. Then he introduced the children who had come out of the house. "This is Virginia, my fifteen-year old niece, and this is Thelma, my thirteen-year old niece."

Virginia was tall and beautiful. Too old to play with, I thought. Thelma seemed more friendly, maybe because she was only one year older than I. The others were neighbors' children who left as soon as Mrs. Forrest announced that lunch was ready.

We entered the house through the front door. Thelma showed us to our room upstairs. It was a very large room with a double bed and a single bed. Cynthia said she wanted the single bed, but I said I was older and took it, surprised that I had asserted myself. I am the oldest now, I thought and felt I should be responsible and protect

Cynthia and Nora, since this was the first time we were away from home since we arrived in America.

"This is the commode," Thelma said, pointing to an item of furniture. I was glad she pointed to it because I would not have known what a commode was. "I filled the pitchers this morning," she continued, setting up a basin and pitcher out. "You'll want to wash up before lunch," she added.

She then opened the cupboard below and pointed to a chamber pot. "You may use this only at night. I'll show you where the outhouse is when we go outside."

"Outhouse?" Nora asked. "What's that?"

Cynthia was embarrassed by Nora's ignorance. "A house that's outside, of course," she replied.

"You have another house outside?" Nora asked.

I wasn't sure what an outhouse was but guessed it must be what one used if one did not use the chamberpot Thelma had pointed to.

"That's the day pot," I said to Nora, "and this,"—pointing to the commode—"is the night pot."

I don't know what Thelma must have thought, but she smiled and said, "That's cute."

I thought of that boy Ernest in my room at school who had called me "cute."

Thelma led me to the dining room through the living room, the two separated by a portiere made entirely from sea shells. One could not go from the living room to the dining room without being heard. The sea shells touching one another made the most musical sounds. Nora went through and came back again.

"I like this curtain," she said.

I took her by the hand and directed her to the table. Mrs. Warren had lunch with us. Mr. Forrest said he would drive her back to Derry after lunch to take a train back to Boston.

"The children don't have good appetites," Mrs. Forrest said to Mrs. Warren.

"They may be a little homesick now," Mrs. Warren said, "but I'm sure that in a day or so they will feel at home."

Then she began to tell them briefly our background. "And I

already wrote to you about their mother," she finished.

"Yes, I know," Mrs. Forrest said. "It must be hard on the children and the mother too. We'll make them feel at home here," and she looked so sincere and motherly when she said it that I knew I would be happy all summer.

We waved goodbye to Mrs. Warren as she and Mr. Forrest drove away, leaving a cloud of dust behind. Mrs. Forrest called Thelma to help her with the dishes. Automatically we all went in, too, and helped clear the table and dry the dishes. Doing work together seemed to be the best way to get acquainted. Thelma and Mrs. Forrest practiced several times until they learned which one was Lydia, which Cynthia, and which Nora.

Virginia, the other niece, had gone out for a walk.

"She always does after each meal," Thelma said.

"To practice her singing," Mrs. Forrest added in her defense. We had heard her singing as she left and she did have a fine voice.

After the dishes were done Thelma took us for a walk and she showed us the outhouse.

"We call that a toilet," Nora said and we all laughed. Nora added, "Where is the bathtub?"

"I'll show you when we get back," Thelma said.

She took us to the neighbor "up the road a hunk." I didn't know what a "hunk" was but when I wrote my first letter to Mother, I told her Thelma took us up and down "the hunk road." I felt so sure Mother would know what a "hunk" was. I wrote our return address very carefully—"R.F.D. No. 1, Londonderry, New Hampshire." I didn't know what R. F. D. was but I didn't want to ask because so many things were so new to us, I didn't want to show my ignorance.

I wrote Mother that I did not know what the R.F.D. stood for. When she wrote to us, she told us it meant "Rural Free Delivery."

I was proud of the knowledge I was gaining on the farm. When we heard the mailman's Ford coming up the road the next time, I called to Nora to run out and see if he had left us any letters in the rural free delivery mail box. I knew now that everyone would know I knew what those letters stood for, but no one paid any attention. It was exciting to see the red flag out on the tin mailboxes whenever

the mailman got there before we did—which was not often.

Mrs. Forrest said grace at each meal and every evening we had family prayers. This part seemed very natural. Mother was pleased when I wrote to her about this. She wrote that she was so glad we were spending the summer with such fine people. She hoped someday she would meet them.

Our first Friday on the farm, the instructions were different from the other days. We were to hurry and finish our chores, take our baths before sunset and be ready for the Sabbath. Mrs. Forrest must have sensed our puzzled looks. She explained that she and Mr. Forrest were Seventh Day Adventists and that as soon as the sun set on Fridays, they stopped working until sunset the next day, because Saturday was their Sabbath. She said it made no difference to God on what day people observed the Sabbath but that they believed Saturday was the Day. She said we could still observe it on Sunday if we wanted.

We took our turn taking a bath in a large tin tub in the shed. It seemed even the chickens and the cows were more quiet after sunset on Friday and all day Saturday. The Forrests did not go to church on Saturday because there were no Seventh Day Adventists in Londonderry. But we gathered in the parlor and Mrs. Forrest read from the Bible and played the organ. Sundays were the only time we went to the parlor. On Sunday morning we saw some of the farmers and some of the city folks like the Hardings going to church. Some went in automobiles and some went in carriages drawn by single horses. I wished I could ride in a carriage again.

Mrs. Forrest was a fine cook. Every day we had hot biscuits and delicious pies. I was even beginning to like baked beans. I could not eat butter at home but after one month on the farm, I even liked butter.

"That will make you put on weight," Mrs. Forrest said. I knew Mother and Papa would be disappointed if we did not return with more weight, so I began to eat butter at every meal and I learned to like it.

I stayed outdoors as much as I could because I wanted to be called "Rosy Cheeks" again. I remembered being called that when I

was little-by strangers.

The family nickname for me, of course, was, "Lemonade." I remembered the nice young man who had taught me to say, "Well, anyway, lemonade is refreshing," when anyone teased me with that name. The thought of him made me sad. I heard he had frozen to death during the exodus from Marash. He had been my hero, the young man I was going to marry when I grew up. But now I was in another world. He was in another world also. How did I start to think of such things I wondered? Oh, yes, I wanted to be called "Rosy Cheeks" again. And that had reminded me of my other nickname, "Lemonade," and my hero—my hero who had frozen while I survived.

"Who would like to go berrying?" Mrs. Forrest called. I ran and picked up a pail. I would go berrying. I would be outdoors to get my rosy cheeks. About eight happy children from the neighborhood walked up the road "a hunk" and into the woods, all carrying pails. Some were to pick blueberries, some raspberries. There was Jimmy, the "barefoot boy with cheeks of tan." I shuddered at the thought of walking with bare feet. It hurt my feet just to watch Jimmy, even with his calloused soles as sturdy as leather. But the cheeks of tan is what I hoped I was acquiring.

Virginia was with us this time. She led the singing. We picked berries to the rhythm of her singing. We joined her in "Peggy O'Neil — Peggy O'Neil was a rogue girl who could steal any heart anyhow, any time. With her Irish brogue, sweet personality, full of rascality, that's Peggy O'Neil."

Soon the pails were filled. We were on our way back. We crossed a beautiful brook with a mossy bank. Some went in wading. Others lay down to rest. I set my pail down and stretched out on the mossy ground, using my right arm as a pillow, gazing at the sky, inviting the sun to give me cheeks of tan.

Suddenly, I jumped screaming, as if a needle had gone through my arm.

"A snake! A snake!" several of the children were screaming. "She had her hand over a snake hole!"

I don't know if I fainted or who took me back to the house, but

all the farmers had gathered around me, each one prescribing a treatment.

"Suck it," someone was saying. Another voice said, "Go after a doctor."

To this day I don't remember what they did with me. When I felt better the next day, I said to myself, "This will make a good topic for a composition in school." Then I could imagine everyone at home say, "Everything happens to Lydia." This was the only unpleasant incident that summer.

The days went by pleasantly. We had many playmates among the neighboring farmer's children, some native but many "city folks" who came every summer. Among them was Kay Harding who lived in the best looking house in the neighborhood. She said her winter home was in Cambridge, Massachusetts. One day she invited us to her house for a watermelon party. Watermelons were always a popular item in our family, but I didn't know just what to expect from a "watermelon party."

When we arrived at the Harding's, Kay asked her mother if we might flip seeds. I didn't understand what she meant, but Mrs. Harding said, "Yes, dear."

Their dining room was unique. A tree was growing right through the floor of the room. Kay explained that when the house was built her grandfather didn't want to chop down that beautiful tree, so the house was built around the tree and it was arranged to be the dining room.

We had fun hanging clusters of grapes on the tree, oranges, apples, anything we could find on the table—all but watermelon. The watermelon was the piece de resistance. We had other things to do with it as we were soon to find out.

When the butler brought platters of watermelon slices, Kay began the battle of the seeds. It did not take us long to follow suit. The poor butler was showered with black seeds coming from every direction. It did not faze him one bit. Apparently he had been exposed to this type of "battle" for a long, long time. He knew how to duck. The danger was not so much from being hit by the seeds as from falling down when stepping on a black, slippery carpet that

had been formed on the floor. Even this he managed to escape, and the only sign of emotion on his face was a slight twinkle in his eyes when one of the children stepped on a seed and fell flat on his face. The laughter from the rest of us shook the fruit on the tree in the room.

There were other highlights during that summer. Mr. Forrest drove us to a lawn party at a church one day. He hitched the horse to the wagon and we went in grand style. The Ford would have looked out of place. The occasion was that Virginia was going to sing a solo. She sang beautifully—"Down by the Old Mill Stream," "The Sunshine of Your Smile," "Somewhere a Voice Is Calling." And our voices, the claque that arrived by horse and buggy, were calling for encores. The evening would not be complete without our favorite,

"Peggy O'Neil." We shouted for "Peggy O'Neil," in spite of some staid heads which were shaking. We did not stop clapping until we heard the word "Peggy." Then all was quiet again on the lawn front.

My reverie was broken by a squirrel that ran across a path near the church lawn. "Maybe it was a skunk," I thought, but it was just wishful thinking, because the true meaning of "As popular as a skunk at a lawn party" had just been made clear to me. This was the first time I had ever been to something people called a "lawn party." Surely I had been to other outdoor events but never to a party on a lawn outside a church. Then I wished a real skunk would really come. That was the only disappointment of the evening. I would have exchanged all the ice cream and cake and other "goodies" for the appearance of a skunk. "Maybe what I saw was a skunk," I kept repeating, but I knew it was a squirrel.

Going back home in the moonlight, we teased Virginia to sing again. We joined her to the rhythmic accompaniment of Dobbins' trot. Life seemed beautiful again. Once more I felt I was a child, even though I was twelve. During the last two years I had not lived in a child's world.

One rainy afternoon when it was impossible to play outdoors, Mrs. Forrest said we may go to play with the neighbor's children who lived up the hill.

"We'll play house," Thelma, our leader, said. Mrs. Forrest allowed Thelma to go to the attic and pick "grown up" clothes. The clothes were not only grown up clothes, but of yesteryear's vintage, perfect for our purpose. Walking "up the road a hunk" we were more concerned in protecting our bundle of clothes from the rain than getting wet ourselves. Our hostess showed us the way to her attic. She said to her daughter, Nell, who was the closest to my age, that we could borrow costumes only from the gray trunk.

In the attic there were no temptations to face us. The gray trunk was the only thing without a lock. When the trunk and the bundles we brought had been emptied, we looked like Flora Dora girls—all but the makeup.

"I have a surprise," Thelma said. She opened her "secret" bundle. She had "borrowed" Virginia's rouge and lipstick. Virginia was the only one among the neighboring farm children who used makeup. She never played with us because she was "much older"—fifteen.

"Let's have some," we all shouted.

"No," Thelma said, "if we all use it, it'll be all used up and Virginia will know I borrowed it. She uses it on special occasions. She used it today before she went to Derry. I'll have to put these back before she comes back tonight."

"It's your sister's, so you use it," I suggested.

"Let's draw lots," someone said.

"Whoever can fix her hair like cootie garages is it," Thelma decided.

My hair was the longest so everyone started on me. While one girl was snarling one side of my hair, another one was snarling the other. One side was snarled more than the other side, so the other side had to be snarled to match the larger cootie garage until I had the largest cootie garages anyone had seen. Then Thelma started the makeup, while someone else was helping me put on the highest heeled shoes we could find. When I looked in a mirror, I could not believe my eyes. I looked so grown up. And my rosie cheeks! I wished I could use rouge all the time. I wondered what Mrs. Deah and the other ladies in the church would think if they could see me now. I had a feeling that Mrs. Deckins would think it was all right. I

could hear her say, "The Deckins, let her use it if she wants to." Anyway, I would write to Mother and ask her if I could use rouge every day because I liked my looks better with rouge and lipstick.

"Let's go down and show you to Mother," Nell giggled. Everyone was giggling now. I was walking gingerly in my high heeled shoes. I remembered one doctor who had said, "She'll be able to walk if she wears the right shoes." I didn't want to wear the "right" shoes. All the "right" things to wear seemed ugly to me. Now I was wearing high heeled shoes, and they felt all right and I could walk in them, and I was always going to wear high heels, I decided.

"Now, which one of the girls is this flapper?" Nell's mother said, with a twinkle in her eyes. Before she could guess, Nell's brother and his chums came in from the barn where they had been playing.

"Guess who this flapper is?" Nell asked her brother. Only through a process of elimination could they guess who the flapper was. Then the boys began to tease me with "How about Saturday night, kid." I really felt grown up, but not the way I had felt for the last two years. I liked this way of feeling much better.

One morning right after breakfast, Mrs. Forrest said, "Today, Mr. Forrest will take you children for a ride to Derry. If you have any errands to do, this will be your chance."

I had hoped we would go in the buggy instead of the Ford. I liked the leisurely rides when we went by carriage. Why everyone called the carriage buggy, I didn't know. When I asked, no one could tell me. "I'll write and ask Mother," I thought. "I'll also ask her if I may use rouge. I'll tell her how much healthier I look."

We went to Derry in the Ford. We counted all the bumps on the road from Derry to Londonderry. When we passed Kay Harding's house we asked Mr. Forrest to blow the horn. Whenever we saw any of our friends or acquaintances, we asked him to blow the horn. Nora was sitting in front next to him so he would let her blow it, saying, "Kids will be kids." Once when Mrs. Forrest chided him for blowing the horn unnecessarily, he had said the same thing, but at that time Nora was not sitting in front with him. After that he always asked Nora to sit in front. Nora was glad not only to blow the horn but she did not feel so car sick sitting in front. Car sickness

was the only thing that bothered Nora. Cynthia and I felt superior in this respect to Tirzah and Nora. She and I never became car sick but Tirzah and Nora did, especially Tirzah.

In Derry we went to the five-and-ten and bought tooth paste and stationery. We saw fancy seals and gold stars and blue and red angels.

We bought a box. Father's birthday was August 15. We would make a birthday card for him with all these fancy seals, we said. We saw some of the farmers in town and it was fun recognizing them and waving to them.

We helped Mr. Forrest do his shopping by reading the list Mrs. Forrest had made out and by checking each item as the list got shorter and shorter. We could see the railroad station where we had arrived from Boston. We had felt so strange then, but now it did not seem strange at all.

"That's where you picked us up," Cynthia said to Mr. Forrest.

"Yes, and you all looked pretty shy when I first saw you," Mr.

Forrest teased.

"And we thought you were going to be an old grouch," we teased back.

"And am I?" he said, winking.

"Yes, you are," we said, laughing, and he knew we didn't mean it.

We chugg-chugged all the way back home, waving at everyone this time, whether or not we knew them. And they waved back. When we turned the corner and could see "our" farm, we shouted, "The red flag! The red flag!"

We all scrambled out of the car, trying to reach the mailbox first. It was the most important event of the day. There was a letter from Mother and one from Tirzah. Mother said Mr. and Mrs. Forrest must be very nice people because she could tell from our letters that we were very happy. We showed the letter to Mrs. Forrest and she said someday she hoped she would meet our mother.

Tirzah's letter said Ben Hur could now say "Weedia, Sinta, and Nowa." He could also point to our pictures and tell who was who. We screamed at this bit of information and were sure he would be a brilliant boy. For a while we were calling one another "Sinta," and

"Nowa," and "Weedia" and it didn't seem silly at all.

We showed Mrs. Forrest our shopping and told her what we were going to do with the angels and stars. She said we could invite Father and Tirzah and Ben Hur to New Hampshire for a weekend if we wanted. We were so excited we wrote a letter right away and could hardly wait for the mailman to pick it up the next day. Then we ran to the mail box hours before the mailman generally came. Finally there was a letter from Papa. Tirzah had written at the bottom, too. They could not come on a week-end because Sunday was Papa's busiest day and anyway Tirzah would get train sick or car sick. Papa took her and Ben Hur to see Mother once in a while and Tirzah always got sick afterwards. Papa said it was already August and we would soon be home. He had missed us very much.

Mrs. Forrest and Mr. Forrest and all of us were disappointed, but we planned the fancy card we would prepare for his birthday on August 15. We wrote several poems and tore them up, wishing we were near Mother so she could help us out. Finally we wrote a poem spelling his name acrostically. Then Thelma said that would be unlucky because there were thirteen lines, so we added Papa's middle initial, "T" - "for the thousand nice things he did." And although this broke up the continuity of the original lines, Thelma thought it would be better than the thirteen lines which had spelled "Aram Bagdikian."

Since my handwriting was the smallest, I wrote it on the stationery we had bought and we made a border with the silver and gold stars and the red and blue angels. Then I made another copy exactly like the first one to send to Mother. This took practically the whole day but we felt it was well worth it. We did not seal it until the mailman came so that we could show it to him. He said it was the most beautiful birthday card he had ever seen and promised he would handle it very carefully.

I stayed awake a long time that night trying to visualize Mother's and Papa's faces when they opened that masterpiece. I could hardly wait for their replies. Something like this surely called for a reply.

The next morning Mrs. Forrest said we had spent too much time

indoors the day before and wanted us to go out and play and get some exercise. We called the neighbors' children and decided to play school.

"You won't get any exercise playing school," Mr. Forrest said.

"We'll play recess," one of the boys said.

"We can have our gymlastic lessons and that will be exercise," I said proudly.

"Gymlastics?" Thelma said. "You mean 'gymnastics.'"

"Gymlastics," I said.

"Whoever heard of gymlastics?" Nell's brother said. "There ain't no such word. It's gymnastics."

"It's not," I said, "it's gymlastics. And if you don't believe it, let's look it up in the dictionary."

"We don't have a dictionary on the farm," Thelma said, "but we have one at home."

"Maybe Nell has one," I said.

"No, we don't," Nell said.

"I bet a million dollars Kay has one in her house," I said.

"I don't think so," Kay said. "But we have a lot of them in Cambridge."

"Well, let's go to Cambridge and get one," Nell's brother said.

"Well, how are we going to settle the argument without a dictionary?" Nell said.

"Well, I'm sure it's gymnastics," Thelma said.

"Prove it," I said. "What does gymnastics mean?"

"Well, it means doing exercise," she said.

"Well, what kind of exercises?" I asked.

"Well, like this," Nell's brother said and started doing the dumbbell drill.

"There, you see," I said, "he's doing gymlastics—stretching exercises. That's why it's called gymlastics. You do stretching exercises in a gymnasium. That's how they get the word—from the word gymnasium and the 'lastic' part because elastic stretches!"

"Gee whiz," everyone said, and everyone called it "gymlastic" thereafter. And we did gymlastics until it was time to go in for lunch.

I didn't know until a long time afterwards that Thelma had been right!

I couldn't wait for a letter from Mother so I wrote to her again. I hoped she had liked the "poem" we had written for Papa. I gave her all the news since my last letter. I told her about the rouge and lipstick and asked her if I could please start using it because everyone said I looked much better with it, and especially much healthier. I also asked her why a carriage was called a "buggy." It never occurred to me to ask her which was right, gymnastics or gymastics, because there had been no question in my mind about that. I remembered so clearly at the Mary Lyon School, Miss Pedersen would open the windows and at least once a day say, "Children, we will now stand in the aisles and stretch out and have our gymlastic lessons." And we would stand up and stretch our hands like elastics and have our "gymlastic" lessons.

The summer was drawing to a close. Some of the neighbors had already left for their winter homes. It was sad to say goodbye to our playmates. We all promised to write to one another. Virginia left three weeks before the opening date of school. She was in high school and needed to buy new clothes. Thelma was still in grammar school so she, like us, was not so grown up and would not need as many things as a high school girl. Thelma and I promised we would always write each other till the end of our days.

A week had passed since Papa's birthday and we were watching and listening for the mailman. We could now tell even before he arrived whether or not there was mail from Rutland or Brighton. He would blow the horn as soon as he turned the corner and we would know the signal. We would crawl all over the car before he even had a chance to stop.

There was a letter from Papa saying how much he loved his birthday present. He wrote such flowery language that it put our "poem" to shame by comparison.

The next day there was a letter from Mother. She thought our birthday present to Papa was the most thoughtful gift one could imagine. And only her children would think of sending her a copy! Now I could hardly wait for her birthday. We must do something

special for her birthday, too, but it was so far away. We would have to wait until it was almost Christmas.

She wrote that it would be perfectly all right for me to use rouge and lipstick because she wanted her children to have the same privileges other children did. She said we did not have to worry about what the church ladies said. She did add, however, that we would have to wait a few more years because we still had color in our cheeks and lips. As we grew older, there would be less color and that would be the time to use makeup. I was a little disappointed but was so glad that I had her permission to use it, even though I had to wait a few years.

She said she would have to guess as to how the word "buggy" came to be used for the word carriage. She said she would let us know as soon as she could find out the real reason, but in the meantime she thought maybe the bugs flew on the horses and flies bothered them and they swished them away with their tails and maybe the bugs ran away from the horses into the carriages. I read this part to the other children and we all laughed and we didn't need to know any other reason. We liked this one.

It was time to go home. Papa sent me the money for our train fare. He said we were old enough to travel alone. Mr. Forrest could put us on the train and he would meet us at North Station. We parted from the Forrests and our playmates with mixed emotions. We were anxious to get home again. But I knew that I would enjoy in retrospect the carefree days of this summer.

Another phase of my childhood days was ending. Now I would go back to washing and pressing, making beds every day, and a myriad of other household duties. It was true I had helped with the dishes here on the farm, I had made beds every morning, but this seemed fun. Here I was helping. At home it would be a regular assignment, an understood duty.

We waved goodbye through the dust that Mr. Forrest's old flivver raised. These roads that only two months ago were strange to us were now happy landmarks. Thelma and Nell came to the railroad station at Derry with us. The others wanted to come, too, but there was no room in the car. I bought three tickets—one full fare and two

half fares. We kissed everyone goodbye—even Mr. Forrest. I think he liked it. He hugged us, saying, “I’m sorry to be losing my little girls,” which made tears come to my eyes. I tried to hide them, but remembered hearing someone say once that railroad stations were like weddings and funerals—it was natural to see people cry.

When the conductor came to get our tickets, he asked where our parents were. We told him we were traveling alone. He asked us where we lived, why we were traveling alone. By now we were used to questions people always asked us, especially grownups.

We played guessing games on the train like the ones we used to play going from Tarsus to Marash. We had not passed through any tunnels on the way to Derry so we knew there would not be any going back either, so we just guessed how many stops there would be between Derry and North Station, how many houses on the right and how many on the left between each stop. This helped pass the time because now that we had left our friends behind, we were anxious to get home and see Tirzah and Papa, and Ben Hur!

A young man helped us with our bags, but before the train came to a complete stop, Papa was boarding it. We all rushed to his arms, weeping with joy. He tried to listen to all of us, each one relating a different incident.

When we arrived home Tirzah and Ben Hur were on the porch waiting for us. We waved as soon as we saw them from the end of our street. Ben Hur looked so much bigger and his golden hair now had a reddish tint and curled all over his head. He had learned to say “hello” and said “Hello Weedia, hello Sinta, hello Nowa.”

“If Mother could only see him now,” we said, and Papa said we would all go to see her before schools opened.

Priscilla and Louise and other neighbors’ children came to see us. They said we looked a little fatter and had a nice tan. All the children wanted to see where the snake had bitten me. I showed the scar proudly. They had never known another person who had been bitten by a snake.

“Did it hurt awful?” they asked, and I said, yes, of course, but I didn’t say it had hurt me much more that day in Adana because they would never understand that.



CHAPTER 25

A New School and a Symphony

When I woke up the next morning it did not seem as if I had been away at all. Londonderry and our friends there already seemed like a far away dream.

Papa gave me some money to go to Boston to shop for the opening of school. Tirzah made out the list and advised me to be sure to buy myself a Ferris waist.

"You're old enough now," she said, but I would not promise because I could still remember how I almost "choked."

"I won't wear anything tight," I said and was about to leave when Mrs. Deekins came.

"Are the girls back?" she asked after she had already seen us. "Where are you going?" she asked me.

"To Boston to shop," I replied.

"Go to Houghton Dutton's," she said, "There are some good sales there."

"Do they sell Ferris waists there?" Tirzah asked her, adding, "Lydia should wear them now, don't you think?"

"Oh, the Deekins," she said, "if she doesn't want to wear them, why should she?"

I liked Mrs. Deekins, I said to myself, even though she was a little odd. I had overheard her tell one of the other ladies that her husband beat her. I told Tirzah about it.

"Don't repeat such things," she said. "Mrs. Deekins always

exaggerates She makes a mountain out of a mole hill." I knew I had heard it but I did not argue with Tirzah. I think she knew it, too, but did not want to admit it.

I had not planned to go to Houghton Duttons but I went out of curiosity. I walked all through the store. I looked at corsets and brassieres. I had intended just to look, not to buy, but a saleswoman came and asked if she could help me.

"Do you have Ferris waists?" I asked.

"Those are going out of style now," she said. "Young ladies now wear either corselets or brassieres. Is it for you?"

"No," I lied, "for my older sister but I think she better come and buy her own."

"That would be better," the saleswoman said and before she could say anything else, I walked away and went to Jordan Marsh Company. I felt more at home there and I found one of the salesladies who always helped me.

"You have a nice tan," she smiled, "where did you get it?"

I told her about Londonderry.

"How nice," she said. "It must have been exciting," which reminded me of my snake bite.

"I was bitten by a snake."

"How exciting!" she said, and I thought, "She doesn't believe me." So I didn't tell anybody else about it.

"I won't even write a composition about it if people are'n't going to believe me," I thought, very much disappointed. But when she remembered to ask how Mother was, I liked her again and gave her the list Tirzah had made out. I had already crossed out the Ferris waist so no one could even tell what was written there in the first place.

As soon as I arrived home, Tirzah asked, "Did you finally buy your Ferris waist?"

"They are out of style," I announced.

"Maybe the name has been changed but not the garment," Tirzah said perspicaciously. I didn't tell her what the Houghton Dutton saleswoman had said. So once more I postponed wearing what I thought would "choke" me.

Mother thought we looked wonderful. She thanked me for the many letters I had written her faithfully. She wanted to see my snake bite. I showed it to her heroically.

"It must have been very painful."

"Yes, but not as much as it hurt when they tortured me at the hospital in Adana."

"They did that to save your life," she reminded me.

Cynthia and Nora had so much to tell also that I had to give them a chance. Tirzah told about the several visits she had made with Ben Hur to the summer home of some friends, and we were glad she had a chance to go away occasionally also. Mother asked if we had the necessary clothes to start for school. Tirzah said I had done the shopping but that I still would not wear Ferris waists. Before I had a chance to repeat that they were out of style, Tirzah said, "or whatever they call them now."

Mother said maybe I would have better posture if I did wear something like that and maybe very soon I would want to without being told. I promised her that I would as soon as I thought I should.

"Well, it's for your own good that I remind you," Tirzah said, and I was glad a nurse came in to interrupt this conversation. She asked if she might take Ben Hur to the patients in the next room because they wanted to see the little boy Mother had mentioned to her. We could hear them admiring him. When the nurse returned him, there was a doctor with her.

"So this is your little Son of Fire?" he said and stroked Ben Hur's curly head.

"He must know what happened," I thought because I had remembered Mother saying Ben Hur had been well named; it meant "Child of Fire," and he certainly had been — the fires of Marash. When his name had been planned years before his arrival, Mother had not realized what a prophetic symbol the name was to be.

It seemed we always had to leave the sanatorium before we had a chance to say all we had planned to say. We generally had to rush for the bus and train, but today Mrs. A. had driven us and she was in a hurry to get back. She was a very gracious lady but entertained a

great deal and was a busy hostess. She had the most beautiful home I had ever been in except the house they used to call "The Palace" at Tarsus-Rasim Bey's house of white marble. Or had it just seemed beautiful then?

We promised Mother we would write her all about our schools and grades. Mrs. A. was surprised to hear that Cynthia had a double promotion.

"I think the others will have a double promotion, too, after school begins," Papa predicted, and again I was tempted to tell him that I might, but again I kept my secret in case I had misunderstood Miss Peterson.

We hugged Mother and kissed her on the forehead. She said the doctor said maybe in a few months she might get out of bed and walk back with us to the waiting room and wave to us we left the grounds. And then maybe some day she would leave the hospital, she hoped. Papa then prayed before we left her and somehow just praying raised one's hopes. It just seemed to shift the responsibility to God.

I had always felt like crying after we left Mother and wondered if she cried after we left. One day I had run back to tell her something I had forgotten. She was surprised to see me and tried to smile, but could not speak right away. I had seen her cry a few tears, and I remembered that I always had to wait a few moments between my tears and any attempts to speak. I could never find the transition easy. When I had run back to catch up with the others, I had not told them what I saw, but that had made me even sadder and I could not hold back the tears that were trying to flow against the current. But I knew now what happened to Mother after we left, and at each parting I knew what would follow.

I wanted so much to whisper, "Mother, please don't cry after we leave," but I did not want her to know what I had seen the day I returned unexpectedly. It was generally Nora who returned to pick up items we had left behind, but the day I had returned, I had left without telling why all they could hear me say was, "Oh, I forgot," and sometimes I wondered if I had forgotten on purpose. I think I wanted to ask Mother some questions I didn't want to ask in the

presence of others, but when I saw her tears, I didn't ask any questions. I just picked up the package that I had left on purpose.

My sixth grade class was housed in a portable two-room structure in the yard of the Mary Lyon School. I felt at home now in this room. I knew most of the children in the room. It didn't seem at all like last year when I began school a month later than the others, and everyone was a stranger. Even the lessons seemed easier now. What the others knew, I knew too. What the others did not know, I did not mind not knowing. Miss Guinan was nice too, even though she was different from Miss Peterson. She laughed often and although I noticed she had a big mouth, she had nice teeth. At recess we sixth graders were boss. We were the seniors of the school. Next year when we became seventh graders, we would have to go to another school—either the Bennett School where Tirzah went, or the Winship School across the street from the Bennett School.

Since my only chance to play was during recess at school, I played to my heart's content. I became the champion double Dutch rope jumper. I could beat everyone at hopscotch. I could even juggle two balls, and sometimes tried it with two apples or oranges. Recess seemed so short, not because I did not enjoy my lessons, but because it was my only chance during the day to play.

One day after I had been in the sixth grade a few weeks, on my way out to recess Miss Guinan stopped me.

"I have been watching your progress," she said, smiling, "and I have good news for you. We're going to promote you to the seventh grade."

I was pleased of course, and said, "Thank you," and started toward the door, for I didn't want to lose any precious moments from play.

"Wait," Miss Guinan called. "You're to go right now. I'll help you clean your desk and check out."

That's not as I had thought it would be. I had thought when the first report cards were issued, there would be a note saying how well I had done and that beginning—and a date would be given—I would be transferred to the seventh grade. I didn't even have a chance to say goodbye to any of my classmates. As the recess bell

rang and the others were coming in, I was going out.

"Go to Miss Winslow's room in the Winship School," Miss Guinan directed me. I knew where the Winship School was. That was where we had been going for our cooking lessons. It was about a ten- or fifteen-minute walk. I would get there in the middle of the morning, not even at the beginning of the day.

As I entered the building, a woman who I thought must be a teacher said, "No loitering in the corridors. Are you late?"

"I have a note for Miss Winslow," I said timidly.

"Well, she's in a room on the second floor," she said.

I found Miss Winslow's room and knocked timidly. Apparently, she did not hear me, for I could barely see her as I raised my heels to look through the glass aperture of the door. With all the courage I could summon, I opened the door and walked in.

"Yes? What is it?" Miss Winslow asked, a little irritated, I thought, for having been disturbed.

"Miss Guinan sent me," I whispered.

"Speak up, I can't hear you!" she ordered, and all eyes turned to me.

"Why were you kept back last year?" she asked, and again all eyes turned to me but she was not listening.

"I was not kept back," I replied and fought back the tears.

"Well, maybe you were too old for the sixth grade, so they sent you to me. I don't even know if there is an extra seat for you here," she said, looking around the room.

"Here's an empty seat," a voice from the back of the room said. "Helen Hawk moved out of town. She won't be back."

It seemed the only note of welcome I could detect. Again, I was among strangers. Miss Winslow continued the geography lesson.

"Now open your books to page..." she began, and then stopped. "I suppose I have to find a book for you," she said, irritated.

"Helen Hawk's books are still in her desk," the same kind voice came to my rescue. The teacher walked down the aisle toward me. She opened Helen Hawk's desk, whoever Helen Hawk was, and said, "I guess everything is there. Find the geography book."

I wished I could go back to the sixth grade. Miss Peterson had

been so nice, and Miss Guinan always smiled when she said anything. I hadn't done anything to irritate Miss Winslow except being in the room.

She asked some questions which I could have answered, but I was afraid she would be angry if I raised my hand. I could imagine her say, "Yes? What is it?" and all I would want to do would be to answer her question. There was one question no one could answer. I was quite sure I knew the answer, but I was afraid if it was the wrong answer, she would scold me, so I did not answer. When she finally gave the answer herself it was the one I would have given. I was sorry I had not, but I had been afraid of irritating her.

A bell rang. I looked at the clock. It seemed too early to go home for lunch. The kind voice who had invited me to the only empty seat in the room said, "We go to history next. Look in the desk for a history book." She waited for me. I followed her out of the room.

As I went out, Miss Winslow said, "This is your home room. Be sure to come back here before you go to lunch."

"I'll take care of her, Miss Winslow," my guardian angel said.

On the way to history class, she said, "Where do you live?"

"Brackett Street."

"Oh, gee, we're neighbors, then," she smiled. "I live on Montfern Avenue. My name is Ruth Bradbury."

I was glad she was a neighbor because I needed a good friend. We had to go out of the building, cross the yard, and go to another section to the history class.

"We have history and English in this building," Ruth said. "Don't mind Miss Chadwick, the history teacher. She looks like a crosspatch and all the kids hate her, but if you mind your business and know your lesson, she's not so bad."

I decided to mind my business and know my lesson.

As we entered her room, Ruth took me to her and said, "She's a new pupil."

"What is your name?" Miss Chadwick asked. I told her, thinking, "she'll never get it," but she repeated it just the way I told her, and gave me a slip of paper on which to write my name. I did and handed it to her. She pointed to a seat in the room. I was pleased

that it was not too far away from Ruth's seat.

"She's not so bad," I thought to myself.

There was perfect discipline in the class, more from intimidation than interest, but I enjoyed the class. I knew I would like history, and I thought Miss Chadwick would be very fair.

After history class we went back to Miss Winslow's room. She smiled when she saw me. I was pleased and surprised.

"I had a chance to read the report that came about you," she said. "I think you will do all right."

Outside, on the way home, I said to Ruth, "There's my sister," and pointed to Tirzah who was going home to lunch also. We ran to catch up with her.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"I got a double promotion today," I said, and Ruth seemed surprised. She had not asked why I had just entered the Winship School, and I hadn't had a chance to tell her before.

Cynthia and Nora were already at home.

"Gee, you always get home first," Nora said to me, "why are you late today?"

"I had to walk from the Winship School," I said, thinking, "This is something like what I had imagined it would be. I would surprise them all but somehow it was not just as I had expected."

"She got a double promotion," Tirzah said.

We rushed with lunch. I had to leave earlier than usual, so we had to leave the dishes. I had to go through the opposite end of the street now in order to go to the Winship School. I passed the Mrs. U's house, hoping I could see Ben Hur.

"Don't go by the house," Tirzah said, "If he sees us, he'll think we came for him. Don't let him see us," so I went back to the other side of the street until it was time to cross to Washington Street.

After lunch we had to go to English class. English was my favorite subject. This class was in the same building as the history class, so we had to go outdoors and back in as we did before lunch. It was a clear, sunny day, but I wondered what would happen if it rained or snowed. Would we have to put on our coats and rubbers?

Ruth took me to the English teacher and said I was a new pupil.

"What is your name?" the teacher asked. She had trouble saying my last name.

"She's not as smart as Miss Chadwick," I thought.

"See me after class," she said, and pointed to a seat about the middle of the room. She collected homework, but of course I did not have any to pass in. I saw her at the end of the period and she asked many questions.

"Where were you before you came to this school?" she asked.

"Mary Lyon School."

"Why weren't you here in September?"

"I was in the sixth grade."

"How old are you?"

"Twelve."

"Where were you last year?"

"In the Mary Lyon School."

"What grade?"

"Fifth grade."

A man came to talk to her, so she dismissed me.

"That was the principal," Ruth said. She had been waiting for me. "She's not as crabby as she looks, but she's a hard marker. And God help anyone who whispers in her room."

I had not planned to whisper in her room, so I felt we should get along.

The best part of my double promotion was Papa's enthusiasm.

"Now, it's Tirzah's and Nora's turns," he said, confident that it was the most logical thing to happen.

"Be sure to write to Mother," he reminded me. I had already written that letter a thousand times in my mind.

I wanted to like all my teachers. Of course, I wanted them to like me, too. I think they all did, but I was not sure about Miss Winslow. Whenever she upset me, I used to think it must be because she was tired. She generally sat down while she taught. My other teachers very seldom sat down while they taught. Miss Guinan used to be full of pep. Sometimes I wished I had not had a double promotion. I liked being in her room.

Whenever I answered questions in Miss Winslow's room, I found

myself whispering.

"Can't you talk louder?" she always asked.

I wanted to tell her that I could talk louder but that I wanted to make myself inconspicuous in her room. She made me feel that my double promotion had been a great burden to her.

Miss Drake was our music teacher. She came to teach us about once a week. She was peppy in spite of her dumpy figure. There were rumors that she was engaged and would be married soon.

"If she can get a man, I guess anyone can," some of the girls giggled.

A week after I had been in Miss Clark's English class, my assignment was to write a letter to a friend. I was glad it was an easy assignment because it was washday at home. Tirzah and I always went to bed very late on such nights. We would finish our work and put the other children to bed. We would then do our homework and sometimes I wished we did not have any homework. "Homework" to me used to mean "housework." Now I knew the difference, because now I was doing both. Miss Clark had said we could write any type of letter we wanted, so I rewrote a real letter I had written to Mrs. R. who had invited me to her house one week and had sewed a beautiful yellow dress for me. I had worn the dress when I went to see Mother, and Mother had reminded me to be sure to write her not only to thank her for my week-end but also for the beautiful dress. I remembered everything I had written in that letter. I was glad now that I could do my homework faster. I wrote as neatly as I could. I went to bed, satisfied that my first English assignment in Miss Clark's room would be a success. I even went to bed a littler earlier that night.

Miss Clark collected our assignment the next day. She walked down each aisle and collected each one's paper individually. I was shocked to find out that some children had not done their homework. "Stay after school," Miss Clark said. They did not seem a bit disturbed.

The following day Miss Clark returned the corrected papers. She called each one in his or her alphabetical order. Each one went to the desk to get his or her paper. She went by the letter "B" but still

my name was not called. All the papers she had in her hand had been returned.

She gave the class an assignment to be done that period. Before I had a chance to open my book, she said, "Lydia, I want to see you."

She still could not pronounce my last name. Everyone watched me go up. I was sure they must have noticed that I did not get my paper back.

"Now tell me," she said sternly, "who wrote this letter?" It was my letter to which she was pointing.

"I did," I replied, surprised at the question.

"Well, then, who helped you with it?"

"No one," I replied truthfully, adding, "My mother is in the hospital so she could not help me, and my father was not at home."

I wanted to exonerate them if she felt they should have helped me, but I did not realize until later that she would not have believed they could have been capable of helping.

"How old are you?" she asked. I could have reminded her that she had asked me that the first day I was in her class.

"Twelve," I replied.

"You are too young to be able to write a letter like this," she said, again pointing to my paper. There was a question mark on it.

"I write letters all the time," I said, holding back my tears.

"To whom?" she asked.

"Mostly to my mother who is in the hospital."

"How long has she been in the hospital?"

The children in the front of the room were listening. Those in back were watching.

"Over a year," I replied.

"What hospital?"

"Rutland Sanatorium."

"Oh," she said, and then added, "Where did you go to school before you came to Brighton?"

"I never went to school before."

"Well, who taught you English?" she said.

"My mother and Mrs. Nute," I replied.

"Who is Mrs. Nute?" she asked, but before I could answer there

was commotion in the room and she went to the source of the trouble, admonishing a boy to see her after school. When she came back she continued the inquiry. When I told her that my mother was once an English teacher also, she told me to go back to my seat. This abrupt dismissal disconcerted me, but I went to my seat quietly.

On the way back to my home room, Ruth asked me why Miss Clark wanted to see me at her desk. I could not get myself to say I thought she thought I had cheated.

"She wanted to know where I went to school before I came here," I said.

A week later we had another letter writing assignment.

"This time," Miss Clark said, "the letters will be written in class. It will soon be Christmas. You will receive many presents. You should know how to write 'thank you' notes."

I wrote my thank you note like the many I had written in the past. I finished mine before the end of the period. Miss Clark came to my desk.

"Why aren't you writing?" she asked.

"I finished my letter," I replied timidly.

"Well, then let me have it," she said and took it to her desk.

I watched her reading it. I saw her watching me. I did not want her to know that I was watching her, too, so I opened my book to our next assignment. At the end of the period as we were leaving the room, Miss Clark stood at the doorway to collect the letters from the rest of the class. As I went by she said, "Very good work, Lydia."

When she returned the corrected papers the following day, she told the class there was no excuse for any misspelled words in a letter. She told the class I had written the best letter with no misspelled words. Miss Clark and I got along very well for the rest of the year, and I tried very hard to merit the confidence she had learned to place in me. English again became my favorite subject.

Mr. Ford was the seventh-grade science and arithmetic teacher. Arithmetic seemed easier this year. Papa could always help me with this subject. He didn't do the problems the same way we did them

in school, but he always had the right answers.

"That must be the old fashioned way of doing it," we told him.

Science was a new subject to me. Having a man teacher was new to me. I liked Mr. Ford. One day he told us that if we soaked bones in vinegar, they would become soft and malleable. After supper that evening I saved the bones from the pork chops we had and soaked them in a bowl of vinegar.

"What are you doing that for?" Nora asked.

"Maybe she wants to soften the bones," Papa said. I was surprised to learn that Papa knew just why I was doing it. He went into more detail than Mr. Ford had, and explained why the bones would become pliant. I took

the soft bones to school the next day and showed them to Mr. Ford.

"Fine," he said. "How many of you tried it?" he asked the class. A few hands went up.

December was a busy time at home and at school. December 13 was Mother's birthday. Another year had passed and she still was away. It was a Tuesday so we could not go to see her. We all wrote to her except Ben Hur, of course. We held his hands and made him write a few crosses for kisses. Cynthia wrote SWAK on the back of her letter.

"That means, 'sealed with a kiss,'" she said. One of her friends in school had told her that. "She's a very smart girl. Her father is assistant superintendent of schools. She lives right across the street from Dr. Mulnix's church."

Then Nora filled a whole page of her letter with "SWAKs."

I don't know what Tirzah and Papa wrote, but I filled all the four pages of the letter paper I had. I had so much to tell her about school-how much better I liked the seventh grade now. I think we all wrote her that although we would have a Christmas tree at home, we were invited to the Roubian's for Christmas dinner...how wonderful it would be if she could be home for Christmas, if not this year, surely by next year.

One day we had oral composition in Miss Clark's room. We had to tell about someone in our family. I wanted to tell about Mother,

but I was afraid when I got to the part about her illness and her being in the hospital for so long, I might cry, so I told about Uncle James, about how he could play the violin and make it sound like a horse, or donkey, or a cat, or a dog, how Mother had named these sounds his Barnyard Concerto, and how he had studied in Germany.

A few days later I saw Miss Clark talking to Miss Winslow. As I passed them, they both smiled. I thought how nice it would be if teachers smiled more often. One is less likely to feel afraid of someone who smiles often, and it is so much easier to like someone who smiles. Both Miss Winslow and Miss Clark looked prettier than I had thought they were, either because they smiled, or maybe because I felt more at ease with them now, or maybe for both reasons.

After school that day Miss Winslow stopped me on my way out and asked me if I liked music.

"Yes," I said, "especially the violin, but I take piano lessons."

"Why don't you study the violin if you like it so well?"

I said my father felt I could do better on the piano because the violin was really a man's instrument. He thinks one needs a great deal of physical strength.

"But someday I am going to study it," I said.

"Miss Clark told me about your oral composition about your violinist uncle," she said. Then I was surprised and pleased when she told that she would like me to be her guest at a Boston Symphony Concert during the Christmas vacation. She said it would be on a Friday afternoon and that she would let me know later about where to meet her and what time. I had never been to Symphony Hall and was pleased not only for myself, but how glad Mother would be when I told her.

"Now we are friends," I thought, and I was even more pleased about that.

Miss Winslow's house was not too far away from Brackett Street, so I walked to her house to meet her. She introduced me to her parents. Then we walked to Washington Street to take a streetcar to Boston. On the way she asked me more questions about my family. When I told her my father was a minister, she said she would like to

hear him preach someday, but when I told her he had two churches and that he preached in Armenian in one and Turkish in the other, I said even I could not understand his sermons, especially the Armenian ones. I could still understand a little Turkish which I was forgetting very fast.

Our seats in Symphony Hall were on the first balcony, left side, near the stage. As the musicians walked on the stage, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups and began to tune their instruments, the cacophonous but euphonious sounds filled the hall. Then the conductor made his grand entrance.

I watched with wonder not only his hands, also his other gyrations, each movement of which seemed to be a signal for a certain sound. The visual effect of the violin bows was almost as intense as the ethereal sounds that were being released. Every bow was going up and down at the same time, ascending, descending, to exact heights.

"I wonder if I could do it," I thought, and decided that same day I would study the violin. Then my mind went thousands of miles away. I wondered where Uncle James was now—if somewhere he, too, was playing the violin.

As soon as I reached home, I wrote to Mother all about it. I also wrote a thank you note to Miss Winslow. I took great pains with this letter. I checked every word for correct spelling. I thought—and hoped—she might show it to Miss Clark. I told everyone at supper that night that I was sure every violinist in the orchestra could play almost as well as Uncle James.

January 30, 1922 was Ben Hur's second birthday. On his first birthday, we had hoped that by the time his second birthday arrived Mother would be at home. But Mother was still in Rutland. The poem she had sent for him brought tears to all eyes, except Ben Hur's. He jumped from his high chair and Papa caught him just in time. Ice cream was all over his face and hair. Papa began to read the poem aloud, but had to stop. I had read it when Papa first opened the mail, and I knew I could never finish reading it aloud without weeping, so I did not volunteer to do so. Tirzah had better self control. Often when I could not refrain from weeping, she

could hold back her tears without a tremor in her voice. She volunteered to read the poem.

WHO IS MY MOTHER?

Here I am, a baby, but who is my mother?
Tell me all about her, tell me now, dear father.
Let us go for a search; maybe we will find her,
Oh, where is my mother?

A sad fate befell her; that is why is she is gone,
With sorrow and sickness, suffering all alone.
Every day, every hour, her heart yearns for her own,
Oh, that is your mother.

I saw one in a bed, from the world set apart.
She gave me such a look that sank deep in my heart,
And my soul leaped to her with a strange, sudden start.
Oh, was she my mother?

Gleams of joy I could see on her face when she smiled,
And she spoke my own name with a voice sweet and mild,
Why did I say "Goodbye" when she called me "My Child?"
Yes, she was my mother.

Birthdays come, birthdays go, with no mother in sight,
Yet I feel a presence beckoning me to light.
If I knew where she was, my soul would take flight,
To find my dear mother.

Even though I'm happy, yet something do I lack,
I can't be satisfied till some day she comes back,
Till I put my little, loving arms 'round her neck.
And I kiss my mother.

Nobody loves like you- mother love is greatest,
Does not fail, does not change, it can stand any test.
The child with a mother enjoys life at its best,
Oh, I want my mother.

Hold me tight, dear mother, in your arms let me rest,
Let me sleep once again, leaning safe on your breast.
Speak my name, sing a song, it is then I'll be blest,
Having my dear mother.

Under your loving care let me grow day by day,
Be near me when I sleep, watch me close when I play.
And sometimes when I'm tired and lonesome, let me stay
On your lap, sweet mother.

Remember, dear Jesus, I need her guiding hand,
I am young and helpless, growing in a strange land.
O Babe of Bethlehem, hear my prayer and do send
My precious dear mother.

With wet eyes we asked Papa, "Do you think Mother will be here on Ben Hur's next birthday?" But how far away another year seemed.

"If we pray sincerely and have enough faith," Papa said, and he opened the Bible for our evening prayer, reading from the eleventh Chapter of St. Mark:

"Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith...What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them..."

If having faith would make Mother well and bring her home I would pray for faith that would remove the mightiest mountain in the world-I would have a Mt. Everest faith.



CHAPTER 26

*Happiest Days
in My Life*

The spring of 1922 was not only unlocking “the flowers to paint the laughing soil,” but it was also bringing joy to our hearts and laughter to our eyes. With lighter heart, our work seemed lighter. I found time to be a little more active in school. In the fall I had not bothered staying after school to take part in the “election.”

Someone named James M. Curley was running for office. The school had set up polls for the students to take part in the elections. The students had placards asking everyone to vote for James Michael Curley. I don’t remember the opponent’s name. I had to rush home after school, so I did not vote. If my heart had been as light as it was in this spring of 1922, I would have voted, and voted for James Michael Curley. He was elected by the students of the Winslow and Bennett Schools. He might have had one more vote from me.

Even Tirzah was bringing friends home now. Work at home seemed easier. School was a happier place. I even found time to read the comics. The Katzenjammer Kids were my favorite. I found myself quoting from them. “Did I done something what I shouldn’t have did?” And one day I took the time to read other sections of the Sunday paper—the ads. It was almost my undoing. I cut out a clipping, signed it, and mailed it. It said anyone selling a certain quantity of laundry bluing could have a choice of any gift shown in the accompanying picture—cameras, roller skates, dolls, Victrolas. I wanted a Victrola.

In a few days a large package arrived in my name.

"What is this?" Tirzah asked.

Everyone watched me open the package, waiting for a great surprise.

"Bluing?" they said.

"Yes," I answered nonchalantly. "I'm going to sell it, and when I send the money to the company, they will send me a Victrola!"

"There is enough here for everyone in Brighton!" Tirzah said.

"You'll have to ring everybody's doorbell," Cynthia said.

My confidence began to wane in spite of Nora's, "I'll help you ring doorbells."

I put the package in the closet.

The package was still in the closet when the first reminder came.

"Auntie Conrad" was there when the second notice came.

"Auntie" Conrad was now a great friend of the family. Papa had met her at a friend's house and she had immediately taken a liking to him. When she heard of the poor man with a sick wife and five young children, she had immediately made it a point to come and meet us. She often went to Rutland with Papa to visit Mother.

At first we had called her Mrs. Conrad, but she insisted that we call her "Auntie Conrad." "I am just like a sister to your father."

When we forgot and called her Mrs. Conrad, she would feel greatly hurt. Sometimes she came and stayed overnight because her home was in another state. The day the second notice came, reminding me that it was time to send the money for the bluing, she asked me why the smile from my face had suddenly faded. I tried to smile again, but she said, "That's not your Mona Lisa smile. I can tell something is wrong."

"What's a Mona Lousy smile?" Nora asked.

Thereafter Nora called me Mona Lousy whenever she wanted to tease me. It was not any name calling that made me begin to really feel "lousy." The letter frightened me. I showed it to Mrs. Conrad and told her about the Victrola I wanted. "Well," she said, "go out and start selling." I sold her a package. She was my first and last customer.

When the third letter came, I decided to show it to Papa.

"I'll buy half of it if you will sell the rest," Papa promised.

He paid me by check which he asked me to endorse and send it to the bluing company with a note saying I would send the rest as soon as possible. When the company received a check in Papa's name, apparently they realized I was a minor, so they started sending threatening letters to Papa. Papa sent them the rest of the money. My Victrola came. We used the bluing for seventeen years, and there ended my first and last experience as a saleswoman.

One of my classmates invited me to her house often. She lived across from a park which she thought would induce me to accept her invitation. How I wanted to go and play with her, but not because of the park. We had our own Thomson's Hill around the corner that made a wonderful place in which to play and run up and down. I wanted just to play, anywhere. I wanted to make myself think I was a carefree child, did not have any responsibilities after school, that I could play like the other children in school.

One day I had the courage to accept the invitation. Then I told Papa and Tirzah I had to accept it to be polite, that I had been invited so many times. It was a wonderful day for me. I felt carefree as I had never felt since the day Mother went to the hospital. Even the downpour that day did not dampen my spirits. My playmate, Dora, looked a little downcast because we could not play in her park.

"Never mind," I said, I like indoor games better. That lightened her already light spirits and she said we could play in her room. She introduced me to her brother, Harry. Harry was in the ninth grade, ever so much older than I. I thought he was good looking, but when he bowed when we were introduced, I thought he was even more handsome!

I didn't meet Dora's father because he was at work and I would have to go home before supper time. Dora's mother was a sweet, meek woman. Apparently her children were her whole life. Dora had a beautiful room, all her own. and Harry had his own room, too. Their house was much better than ours.

"I wish I had my own room, too," I said to Dora. Then I felt ashamed, for I immediately remembered what Mother said so often,

how she wished she had sisters. So quickly I added, "But I'm lucky to have so many sisters."

I was surprised to see so many dolls in Dora's room. We were both in the seventh grade.

"Mother still thinks I am a baby, so I still get at least one doll every Christmas," Dora said.

"We have a real baby in our house," I said, "my little brother, Ben Hur. He's two years old. You must come and see him."

"Oh, I would love to," she said, running to ask her mother if she may come to my house to play. Then Dora showed me all her new clothes. There was a closet full and I admired them all. This rainy afternoon, the longest respite I had in many months, ended all too soon.

"I must go home now, before it gets dark," I said. "I have to do my share of work at home."

Dora knew my mother was ill and already had told her mother, who was very sympathetic.

"May I walk home with Lydia?" Dora asked her mother.

"Then you'll have to walk back alone, dear," her mother said, a little frightened.

"I'll walk back with her," I said, and then we all laughed.

It seemed while we laughed that it had stopped raining and the sun peeked through the clouds, as if it were joining us in laughter. Then Harry came out from his room and volunteered to walk with us so he could walk back with his sister. I thought he was the most gallant boy I had ever known. He opened the door for me, helped me down the two steps to the walk. How I wished there had been a thousand steps! I was glad it was a long walk home. He walked on the outer side of the sidewalk, leaving me between him and Dora. Every time we crossed the street, he took my arm and helped me across.

As we approached Brackett Street, I said, "I'm almost home now; I won't be afraid now."

"We'll take you right to your door," he said.

I said, "Thank you," but was afraid Nora would be right there to see Harry helping me cross the street and walking right up the

piazza to the door, as I was sure he would do. And Nora would tease me and tell the others about it. I had not planned to tell anyone about it. Fortunately, no one was around. I was disappointed and relieved at the same time.

When I went into the house, Nora was setting the table.

"Where have you been?" Cynthia said. "I had to do some of your work."

"Good," I said, "this was my afternoon off."

"That's how maids talk," Cynthia said.

"Well, then, that's what I am maybe," I answered her, trying to be sarcastic but not feeling at all bitter, because I imagined I was Cinderella coming home with Prince Charming. No one asked me if I had a good time, so I didn't say anything. No one asked me if Dora had a brother, so I didn't say anything.

While we were doing the dishes, I did say that I would like to go to Dora's house again and that because of the rain, we couldn't play in the park. Maybe next time it would not rain. But no one was listening to me until I said I had invited Dora to come to play with me some day, adding, "She wants to see Ben Hur."

I went to Dora's house as often as I could. And Dora did come to meet Ben Hur and she thought he was the cutest baby she had ever seen. And I knew she envied me for the three sisters I had. And every time I went to Dora's house, Harry was at home and each time he seemed more polite and more gallant. I wished all the boys I knew could be like him. And one day Dora asked me if I liked boys.

"If they are the polite kind," I said nonchalantly.

"Me, too," she said, "especially if they are tall, dark, and handsome."

Harry was tall and handsome and polite, I thought, but blond.

"Well," I added indifferently, "if they are tall and handsome and polite, I guess it won't make any difference if they are dark or blonde."

"Or with red hair," Dora added, laughing. Then I laughed too as we both said "Like Georgie Porgie!"

George was the class clown. It was because of him that I had learned to say "George Porgie, pudding and pie." We all liked him,

but his carrot red hair and million freckles made him seem more entertaining than romantic. I didn't tell Dora that her brother was the polite, romantic type I liked, that I imagined I would marry him some day.

A few months later, Papa announced that we were to move away. I was heartbroken. I might never see Harry again.

When we did move away, I eventually forgot Harry until many years later when I picked up a newspaper and read about a young man whose generosity had been his undoing. This generous, gallant young man, the quintessence of sartorial perfection, tipping cab drivers five dollars each time! And there was my Harry, the Prince Charming of my adolescent days, in jail because he had generously been tipping cabdrivers five-dollar bills, bills he himself had printed!

It was June again and time for schools to close. We were all promoted, except Cynthia. She had a double promotion again! But even better than that was the news that Mother was feeling better.

Papa announced that Cynthia, Nora and I would again be away for the whole summer.

"What about Tirzah and Ben Hur?" we asked.

"This time they will go, too," Papa said.

"Oh, we'll all be together then," I said.

"No," Papa said. "Cynthia and Nora and you will go to a private camp. And Tirzah will go to a private home in New Hampshire."

"Londonderry?" New Hampshire meant Londonderry to us.

"No, Canobie Lake."

We had never heard of Canobie Lake, but it seemed so far away.

"Where are we going?" Nora asked.

"To a small camp in Westwood, Massachusetts," Papa said. "It is a very fine place where there will be seven of you. It is a camp operated by a nurse. You will have good food and care and will all be very strong at the end of summer—in good health when Mother comes home."

"Mother coming home!" we shouted in glee.

"I can't promise," Papa said, "but the doctors are very hopeful, so we must pray harder than ever to make this come true."

I didn't think it was possible to pray any harder than I was, but I

found a way. Prayer became an important part of my life. It could bring Mother home.

So, happily we went to our private camp. Miss Harris, the nurse, came to the station to meet us, in a car driven by an obese gentleman who turned out to be her boy friend. They were probably both in their late twenties or early thirties—that seemed very old to me—but we liked them both, especially Bill. It seemed true that fat people were good natured. Bill was very good natured. I wondered why extra fat made one good natured, but I have not yet found out.

There were four other girls in the camps, some older than we, some younger. It seemed to be a good arrangement, since we could each pick out someone our age. I had never been in a camp before and was afraid I would not like it, since we had to sleep in cots. The camp site was built a few inches above the ground. It had a wooden floor, but a tin roof, covered with black tar paper. It was more like a screened porch than a house, in the middle of an open field. Miss Harris's mother lived in a very nice house several hundred yards away.

We took a sponge bath every night, but once a week we went to Miss Harris's mother's house to take a real bath. We would take turns riding to town with Bill when he did the shopping for Miss Harris. He came just on week ends because he had to work during the week. Whenever Miss Harris ran short of groceries, we would take turns going to her mother's house to borrow whatever item was needed.

Near Mrs. Harris's home was an old country store where we could buy some of the items needed. In that store was a Miss Halliday. I thought she was very charming and friendly. One of the girls at camp had heard someone say that Miss Halliday was an actress, that she came there just for the summer to be with her widowed father. I was by nature a bashful person, but once in a while when least expected, I would blurt out a question. When everyone was willing to talk, I stood back and let them talk. But it seemed when no one had the courage to talk at a particular time, that's the time I would talk, like fools who enter where angels fear

to tread. All the girls were curious to find out if Miss Halliday was really an actress, but no one seemed to want to ask her.

"If I go to the store often enough," I told them, "I'll ask her."

Soon I found myself going to the store more often than my share. One day Miss Halliday engaged me in conversation. She asked me many questions and soon I found myself talking about myself freely, something I very seldom did. I could talk freely about my family but very seldom could I talk about myself. Miss Halliday was drawing me out without my being aware of it. I had not realized until she called my attention to the fact that whenever she asked me a question about myself, my reply was about another member of my family. I had told her about Cynthia and Nora every time she had asked about Mother. When she asked me in what grade I was, I had told her politely and then gone on to tell more about the rest of my family.

"Why do you always do that?" she asked me.

I was puzzled. "What do I do?" I thought, wondering if I had offended her.

"Why don't you want to talk about yourself?" she asked.

It was then that I had blurted out, "Are you an actress, Miss Halliday?"

I had not intended to change the subject. It was just that I did not know what else to say about myself, and asking a question seemed to be a good way to continue the conversation. As soon as the question had left my lips, I did not know whether to feel sorry or relieved. Would she be angry? Had I been impolite? Miss Halliday soon reassured me with a smile.

"If you are interested in the theater," she said, "why don't you get your sisters and the other girls around here and we'll put on an entertainment for the neighborhood people, natives and transients."

I promised her I would and ran back as fast as I could.

"Miss Halliday is not only an actress, but a producer," I announced.

"What? How do you know? Who said so?"

"I asked her. She'll help us put on a show to entertain the neighborhood people, natives and transients."

"Transient" was a new word for me. When nobody was looking, I looked it up in the dictionary, just in case someone asked what that was. I was so glad Miss Harris had a dictionary in the camp. She also had a typewriter. I had never typed before, but the letters were visible, and I had already written a letter on it to a friend, very proud of my worldly accomplishments.

Within a few days we had about twenty-two children coming to rehearsals in an old barn across from the Halliday store. Some were able to dance, others to sing, or recite. Cynthia, Nora, and I sang an old German song one of the German nurses had taught us in Marash. I remembered syllables that meant nothing to me and I hope no one who attended that entertainment knew any German.

We even charged admission. Ten cents, I think it was. The "house" was sold out. People were standing. We sold ice cream. Miss Halliday must have arranged this, maybe from her father's store. Except for those of us who were in Miss Harris's camp, all the other children in the acts had their parents there. Vacationists who had never met before, met at this gathering. They were already planning to form bridge clubs and whist clubs and other clubs to pass the summer days and evenings in this rural community. Those were not the days of radio and television which excluded the necessity for social intercourse.

The local press carried a news item about the summer vacationists who had come for an evening of sociability to see a show put on by their children, coached by Miss Halliday. Whether or not Miss Halliday was an actress or a producer, she no doubt knew much about man's gregarious nature.

I felt guilty for being given the credit for bringing about this neighborhood gathering that turned out to be a "get acquainted" project. All I had done was ask a question. A question to which I had not yet received an answer!

The next day, Miss Harris said that since she thought I might make a good leader, I might make a project of clearing the yard! We went out with brooms and rakes. There was an old door on the ground over which we had to step each time we went to "the country club."

"This yard would look so much better," I said, "if we throw away this old door somewhere far away in the woods. I can't lift it alone."

She called out, "Everyone come to help!"

We all surrounded the door that was lying on the ground.

I said, "On the count of three, everyone lift it," holding on to one corner as I counted. "One-Two-Three!"

As fast as we lifted it, everyone screamed and we dropped it.

Huge, black snakes were crawling under the door. I certainly was a leader-leading everyone indoors, screaming!

Workmen building a road across a nearby field rushed to the scene of danger. Miss Harris rushed out. "Snakes, Snakes!" we yelled.

"Is that all?" Miss Harris asked.

"Lydia was bitten by one..." Cynthia began, and before she could add "last year" Miss Harris almost fainted.

"Who was bitten?" the workmen asked.

I wanted to dramatize it and to say "I was...last year," but I had inhibitions. This was not the time to be funny.

"No one," I said, "but we were all afraid. I was bitten by a snake last year."

We pointed to the door lying on the ground. The men went to it and lifted it. They dropped it almost as fast as we had.

"What whoppers!" they said.

We were pleased they did not think we were exaggerating. They said they would come back with the proper tools to kill them. I stayed indoors during this process, and for the rest of the summer I was afraid to walk across the field, or walk to the store.

Soon after the snake episode one of the girls became ill. Miss Harris sent for a doctor. He said she had the mumps.

"Now they'll all get it," Miss Harris moaned.

"Most likely," the doctor said, after examining all of us.

We all waited. Each day one mere girl had it. Now there were four with mumps, all except Cynthia, and Nora, and me. We waited for our turn but it never came.

Because I was older than Cynthia and Nora and all the other girls had the mumps, it became my lot to do all the errands again. Every day I had to cross the fields to go to the store or to Mrs. Harris's

mother's house. The construction work on the roads that were being built through the fields was still going on. I was still afraid of snakes, but some of the construction workers who had come to kill the snakes near our camp assured me they would watch out for snakes and protect me. As a result, I found familiar faces during my trips across the fields and when the men talked to me about snakes and the children with the mumps, I found it natural to stop and talk with them.

On one of these occasions, apparently Mrs. Harris was waiting for me and watching me from the window. As soon as I arrived at her house, she took me into her room, shut the door, and asked, "How old are you?"

"Thirteen."

"How much do you know about sex?"

"I remember everything my mother told me," I replied.

"That couldn't be much, then," she said, "because mothers don't tell their daughters."

I came to Mother's defense immediately. "Before she went to the hospital, my mother told us everything she thought we should know," I said, not understanding why she was questioning me.

"If she had told you everything," Miss Harris said, "you would not be stopping to talk with those laborers. I watched you. They were looking at you. What were they talking about? Why did you stop to talk to them?"

Before I had a chance to answer any of her questions, she continued,

"Do you wear a Ferris waist?"

"That Ferris waist again!" I thought, admitting to myself that maybe Tirzah had been right and said, "I plan to get one as soon as we go back home and I shop before the opening of school."

"You shop? Where do you shop?"

"I go to Boston," I said, "to Jordan Marsh Company."

"All by yourself?"

"I always go by myself," I replied, whereupon she said, "You should not do that at your age, someone might attack you, like one of the laborers here on the road."

"I'm not afraid," I said.

"You take this package and get back as fast as you can," she said, "and don't talk to any of the men. I'll watch you, until you are out of sight."

This meant she could watch me almost all the way because the only turn there was before reaching the camp was almost at the camp itself. I left her as fast as I could and began to run. She called me back.

"Now what?" I thought but was not prepared for her next remark.

"Don't ever run again until you begin to wear a Ferris waist."

I started out again, thinking, "Ferris waist, Ferris waist...that's all I hear. I wanted to run-from her."

"She's making a mountain out of a mole hill," I thought, not realizing the import of this saying. I began to walk as fast as I could, without running. One of the workmen said, "That's a big package you have there, sister."

"It's not heavy," I said, and wondered if Mrs. Harris could hear at this distance. I wanted to turn around and see if she was still watching, but I remembered her admonition. I imagined I was running away from Sodom and Gomorrah and like Lot's wife would turn into salt if I looked back.

I did not promise her I would not turn around to watch her, I thought, and mustered enough courage to turn around. I did not turn into salt, but I did see her watching from a window at the back of the house.

"She is doing this for my own good," I tried to think, but somehow I could not convince myself. I was more than eager to have anyone take a motherly interest in me. I welcomed such opportunities because I felt more like other children with mothers at home, but somehow her warnings had seemed more gossipy than motherly.

Everyone at camp seemed to be waiting for me.

"Where have you been?" Miss Harris asked. "I suppose Mother wanted to show you all her plants."

"Yes," I said, so glad that she had supplied an answer for me.

"I thought maybe you met a snake," Nora said.

"I thought I saw one," I said.

The next day Miss Harris took the laundry to her mother's house and as I was the oldest at camp, I was given instructions to look after things. The children with the mumps were not very sick, and since it seemed we were immune to mumps, we played checkers. We took turns using the typewriter. We played the Victrola. Our favorite record was "In the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia."

Miss Harris didn't say anything about the visit to her mother, but beginning with the next day whenever we went, as we did at least once a day, to get the mail and I had to go to Mrs. Harris's, she told Nora to go with me to keep me company. Whenever she asked Cynthia to go, Cynthia said, "Nora likes to go, and anyway, I like to stay here with you, Miss Harris." So Nora and I became the regular couriers, Nora because she always liked to be going somewhere and I because I had not yet learned to disobey and did not possess the art of flattery.

One day I felt rewarded for all the times I had trudged in the hot sun to do the daily errands. There was a letter from Papa with the most wonderful news in the world! Mother would be home in September!

The doctors had said she could be discharged as a quiescent patient. I did not know just what "quiescent" meant, but thought it must be a wonderful word if it meant Mother could come home. Nora and I were sitting on Mrs. Harris's porch, reading our mail. Papa's letter was addressed to all of us, so I opened it, with Nora reading over my shoulders. Mother would be home after two years. We could be like other children. We could shout, "Mother!" and Mother would be there!

"Why are you crying?" Nora asked.

"I'm not crying," I said, drying the tears of joy.

When we had finished reading the letter, Nora snatched it and ran like lightning toward the camp, raising clouds of dust behind her. With a peace that passeth all understanding, I followed her at snail's pace. I wanted to absorb the full impact of this good news, and I did not want to hurry about it. It was like wanting to eat slowly the food and dessert I liked, hurrying the foods I did not like

— just to get it over with.

I wanted to think slowly about this new life that lay ahead. I felt the way I did after listening to music that touched me so deeply that I could not applaud like the other people in the audience. I often felt how terrible it would be for artists if all their listeners were like me. There would be no applause except when the performance was not so good. When it was deeply moving, I did not want to be awakened from my reverie. I would still be enjoying it in retrospect while others would be applauding tumultuously and shouting "Bravo!" I was a subjective listener.

Snakes may have crossed my path. The workmen may have uttered their usual words of greeting. Of all this I was unaware until I realized I had reached the camp all too soon. Nora had already spread the news and Cynthia was now reading the letter again to Nora.

"She will be home in September!" they were repeating. It was now the middle of August and we would soon be going home, getting ready for Mother's homecoming.

If someone had asked me the happiest days of my life, I would have said this day, and one other very memorable day — the day Nora reached us at Islahia and we were once more a complete family and took the train that left behind us our week of exodus from fire and icy death.

My prayer that night was Psalm 95. I had been taught this was the Psalm of Thanksgiving. I was waiting for the day when I could read it with my heart instead of just with my lips. I was also thankful that I had taken heed of the faith preached in the eleventh chapter of St. Mark, that my faith had removed and cast a mountain into the sea. I was at last at peace with myself. I had kept my bargain and He had rewarded me. I was again on good terms with God.

A few days later we had another letter from Papa. Being away from home with only Cynthia and Nora had given me prerogatives I did not have at home. Here I was the oldest. Cynthia and Nora were responsible to me. Here, it was I who would be the first to open all letters addressed to us jointly.

"Dear God," I prayed as I tore open the envelope, let this letter continue the good news, not change it adversely."

It was good news. Yes, Mother was really coming home. In fact, Papa had bought a house where we would have plenty of room and a large yard with fruit trees.



CHAPTER 27

Stoneham

The doctor in Rutland had told Papa it would be best for Mother to live in a town with a high elevation. Papa had gone to the State House to check statistics about the best towns for altitude in the suburbs of Boston. He was told Sharon and Stoneham. He had checked and found Stoneham to be the nearer to Boston where his churches were, the Armenian-speaking Armenians' Church and the Turkish-speaking Armenians' Church.

These two church groups were "friendly rivals," much like the Yankee Americans and the Americans of the South. The Armenian-speaking Armenians looked down at the Turkish-speaking Armenians as being less patriotic, in spite of the fact that they realized this group had been forced to make Turkish their mother tongue. The Turkish-speaking Armenians, in turn, looked down on the Armenian-speaking Armenians because those who spoke Turkish, being closer to Europe, had been exposed to European and American culture, taught in American schools by American missionaries. This contrasted with Armenians who had come from Armenia proper [known historically as "Greater Armenia"], which was in the northern hinterland near Russia, away from the Mediterranean region.

The Armenian-speaking Armenians from the north [in Armenian history, known as "Greater Armenia"] thought of themselves as "pure" Armenians, saying that the Cilician or "Gilikiatzi" Armenians nearer the seacoast had many intermarriages at the time of the Crusades to the Holy Land, beginning in the eleventh century. ["Cilicia" is, roughly, the southeastern part of Turkey, historically

known as "Lesser Armenia."] Bands of Crusaders remained in the Holy Land and environs and, it is said, had their pick of the most beautiful women there. Papa used to tell us the stories his parents had told him about one of their ancestors who had married a German who came to the Holy Land with the army of Conrad III. Although no one had any way of proving or disproving this, it had passed from generation to generation. The fact that Papa had two sisters with bright red hair had been attributed to this.

Mother, too, had on her side our Aunt Paypee who was a woman of rare beauty, a beauty that had been her undoing as I had seen earlier. People often asked us where Ben Hur got his "strawberry blond" hair and we used to say from a German ancestor.

Papa had to divide his time between the Cilician Armenian Congregational Church and the "Other" Armenian Church, and at the same time completing courses at the Harvard University School of Theology. He was not only too busy, but also his work now required his dealing with three languages — Armenian for his Armenian-speaking Church, Turkish for his Cilician Armenian Church, and English for all other purposes.

He used to say everything was reversed when he came to America. While in Turkey — Cilicia — he spoke English more frequently than he did after he came to America. In Turkey he was not only teaching in an American college but also was carrying out the plans he and Mother had made to make English our mother tongue. Now, in America, he had to preach to two congregations, each in a different language, neither of them in English. Sometimes members of his congregations would tease him because he was beginning to inject English and Turkish expressions when he was speaking Armenian, or Armenian and English expressions when he was speaking Turkish. In a short time he was speaking better Armenian here than he had before he came to America because he spoke Armenian more often after he came to America. Every now and then at home he would inject Armenian and Turkish words when he spoke English. Mother used to say he would have to go back to St. Paul's College in Tarsus to practice his English.

In his letter announcing our move to Stoneham, Papa said the

change would definitely be an improvement. It was a one-family house—he had never liked living in a three-family tenement. The disadvantages were the distance, plus the double carfare to Boston. From Brighton he could go anywhere in Boston for ten cents. From Stoneham it would be twenty cents each way. And after 8:30 in the evening, the streetcars stopped at Stoneham Square instead of at the end of the line, called Farm Hill after the name of a Boston & Maine Railroad commuter train stop there. In the evening he would have an extra fifteen-minute walk home. Since his work required him to be away mostly in the evenings, this meant a long walk almost every evening. “But,” he said, “thank God I am still healthy and young, and won’t mind walking.”

When I read the word “young” I had misgivings because I knew he was just forty-two and certainly that could not be called “young.” (At thirteen one does not think of “forty” as the prime of life. One has to reach that point in life to realize that the concept of age is relative.) So I was a little concerned about Papa’s having to walk about twenty minutes from the car line each day. I wished he could afford to buy a car, but I was afraid God would be angry with me if I wanted that, too. We now had a house which was nothing compared to having Mother at home again, and to want a car in addition would be the epitome of greed. I dismissed the idea as fast as I could because I wanted to remain on good terms with God.

Papa had added that when we returned from Westwood in New Hampshire, we would be going straight to Stoneham. Tirzah had started to pack and would be settled in Stoneham by the time the rest of us arrived.

We could hardly wait for our last week in Miss Harris’s camp to end, not because we were unhappy—on the contrary we had a very pleasant summer—but there was so much to look forward to. There would be Mother in our new home. And Ben Hur could be home all day. He would not have to be “boarded out” even during the day.

Those were the days I really loved God, and I promised that just because I had everything I have now, I would not forget Him and my prayers. I would not make it a case of “God and the Doctor alike we adore, but only when we need them and not before.”

Miss Harris's boy friend drove us to the railroad station and we took the train to North Station in Boston. At first Miss Harris had hesitated about our traveling alone, but I had assured her that it was less dangerous than going to Boston alone, since there were three of us and Papa was going to meet the train. Papa was right there as soon as we alighted and we kissed and hugged him and asked, "Is Mother home yet?"

"Not yet. But I will get her after all of you are home. Tirzah and Ben Hur came yesterday."

We had to run to keep up with Papa. We went in the subway, then on the elevated trains, then to a station called Sullivan Square. We had a long wait for the car that would take us to our new home. "The cars do not run often," Papa said, not in a manner of disappointment but just as a point of explanation.

"What will the car sign read?" I asked after seeing a car marked "Elm Street." Our new address was to be Elm Street — 59 Elm Street. "Stoneham," Papa replied, adding "You must not take the car marked 'Elm Street' because it is 'Elm Street' in Medford."

Finally a car marked "Stoneham" came and we boarded it excitedly, knowing that being on it would mean getting nearer home. Cynthia sat with Papa and Nora and I sat behind them. Every time the car stopped, we would say, "Is this the stop?"

"No," Papa said. "Our stop is the end of the line. We have a half-hour ride."

The car swayed and rolled. At times it went so fast that it seemed as if we were on a roller coaster. Soon Nora turned green and I was afraid she was going to be car sick. Then Papa said, "Look out the window and don't miss this beautiful scene." He was pointing to Spot Pond, a beautiful pond we were soon to take for granted because we would pass it every time we went to Boston. I was afraid when Nora saw the water, she would get seasick as well as car sick, but the scenery interested her and she said, "We can come here to learn to swim."

"Swimming is not allowed here," Papa said. "It is drinking water."

The car then stopped in a spot called "The Sheep Fold" where there was another car waiting. We remained in the first car but the

motorman from the other car came to our car, and our motorman went to the other car.

"Why are they doing that?" Nora asked.

"So that the new motorman won't know we already paid our fare and may collect again before we get off," Papa said laughing.

"Well, I'll tell him I saw you pay," Nora said, and Papa had to explain that he was joking when he said that. He said the longer we travel, the more we have to pay and that was fair. Then he asked if we knew how to spell "fare" as in "car fare" and "fair" meaning "just." Cynthia gave the answer before I did, although I knew it, too. Nora said she had not had that in school, and I don't think she cared.

But this spelling lesson suddenly made us realize that we would have to go to different schools. Up to now, in our excitement, we had not thought of changing schools and some of the good friends from whom we would have to part. I had been so happy during the latter part of my seventh grade term that I was really sad about having to transfer.

When the car finally careened out of the Spot Pond woods and turned the bend to the main highway, we were on Main Street, Stoneham. The car climbed an incline and then went down again. When the motorman shouted, "Stoneham Square!" Nora stood up.

"Not yet," Papa said. "We will ride to the end of the line. It is not yet 8:30."

It was mid-afternoon. The car waited for a while in the Square and we became impatient.

"Is the car broken?" Nora asked the motorman. If he had not turned around and seen how cute she was, I think he might have been angry. But he soon smiled and we all smiled. By this time there was no one else in the car, but then a few people boarded the car for that short ride and we wondered if they had to pay the same carfare for that short distance.

Finally, we arrived at Farm Hill station. Papa took the largest suitcase and we each carried the smaller ones. We had to follow Papa at each step because we didn't know where to turn. All this was new to us. He stopped, and we asked if this was the house. He smiled and didn't tell us, teasing us to guess. Then I saw the sign,

"Elm Street," and was excited. Papa stopped again but I kept right on going.

"Where are you going?" Nora asked.

"We're not there yet," I said smugly.

"How do you know?" Nora asked.

"I can tell," I said, even more smugly, not letting on that I was looking for number 59 which I had remembered. Papa could tell I was watching the numbers because I crossed the street when I realized he had purposely gone on the opposite side of the street.

Now they were following me, and I think Papa was really proud to think I was smart enough to figure this out. At a little distance I saw a beautiful stucco house and hoped it would be our house, but it was number 55. The house next to it was a much older house, but it was on a higher elevation than the stucco house. It had a beautiful sloping lawn and a larger yard and many trees, especially a huge catalpa tree in bloom. Before I could find the number, Tirzah ran out the door with Ben Hur in her arms. Yes, we were home again.

Our "new" house, was said to be one of the oldest houses in Stoneham. Downstairs it had a living room, a library, a dining room, and a kitchen. Upstairs there were four large bedrooms and a bathroom. In the attic there was a large finished room and another very large section where everything one could not make use of but did not want to throw out could be relegated. The people who sold the house had left the contents of this attic to the new buyer.

Every time we took something of our own to this attic, we would spend hours exploring the contents of boxes left there by some previous owners. Some of the relics must have dated to the Civil War. We were able to use one item from this collection and it became a favorite of mine—a large picture in a white wooden frame of the Barefoot Boy. We hung it in the front hallway downstairs and I could never pass it without stopping not only to study the details of the picture but also to read and reread the poem that was in the lower right hand corner of the picture, inside the glassed frame. I thought how much fun it would be in a few years, when Ben Hur was older, if we dressed him like this boy—a barefoot boy with cheeks of tan.

The house had a front door, a back door, and a side door. To go upstairs we had front stairs and back stairs. We had many choices of entrances and exits. What a lot of fun it would be playing hide-and-seek. Part of the house had electricity and the rest gas jets. Papa had already hired an electrician to remove the gas entirely and to electrify the whole house.

It was fun running through all the rooms, upstairs and downstairs, and all the way up to the attic. Our furniture looked better in this house and there seemed to be some items I knew did not come from Brighton. In addition to our own player piano which Papa had put in the living room, in the library there was an old Miller grand piano and a pump organ. I sat at the grand piano, Cynthia at our own piano, and Nora at the organ. What we played or how we played did not matter. It was sheer joy and fun. Nora was using all her excess energy pumping away at the organ. So much music in the house reminded me of my phonograph. I jumped up from the piano bench to look around all the rooms for the phonograph. It was nowhere in sight. "Maybe it hasn't been unpacked yet," I thought. But Papa seemed to have everything unpacked and the house did not look like one into which people had just moved. Papa was outdoors where he was spending most of his time. He was in his glory with all the land that was part of his purchase.

"What a beautiful garden we will have next year," he said, "but now we can enjoy the fruit trees."

There were many apple and pear trees laden with fruit. He pointed to the catalpa tree, boasting, "I was told that is the largest catalpa tree in Stoneham."

I finally remembered why I had run outside.

"Papa, where is my phonograph?" I asked.

He said, "I gave it to one of the neighbors. She came to help me pack and asked if she might have it."

I felt more dejected than I pretended, for after all, it was really Papa's and not mine.

"Never mind," Papa said, "we'll get a better one, but anyway, I brought all the bluing so we can still use that—for many years."

I was too excited to sleep that night. I would sit up in bed or get up and look out the window and in the moonlight I could see a lovely yard and beautiful trees, not someone else's house a few yards away as it was on Brackett Street in Brighton. But above all this, Mother would be home in a few days.

"Dear God," I kept praying while at work or play, "Don't let this be just a dream."

When I woke up each day, as soon as I realized my new surroundings, I repeated again, "I hope this is not just a dream." Our new home was a reminder that we were here because Mother was coming home.

We took special pains to prepare her room for her. Her room was to be the one facing the backyard. There were windows on three sides of this room and from each window she could see fruit trees and stretches of land, and in the morning the sun from the East would pour in. The door to this room led directly to the hallway, the back stairway going downstairs, and to the bathroom. Some of the other rooms were not located so conveniently.

Maybe thirteen was too old an age for a girl running around in the yard, climbing and descending sloping lawns, but I felt younger than I had since the day of the first gunshot in Marash that started the holocaust. Although the yard was green with trees and flowers and Papa had cut the grass to look like green velvet, I could still picture, in a few months, the beautiful white snow on which we could coast. Yes, even I might now have a chance to go coasting on a sled.

But even more exciting than all this was a letter that had just come from Mother. We could see the mailman coming up the street. Already in the few days we had been home, we had become good friends. He would stop and chat with Papa. I think he was glad for this chance because by the time he reached our house, he had arrived up hill at the summit of the street and he was glad to set down his heavy pack. When we saw the letter from Mother, we teased Papa to open it right away.

"They are impatient," Papa explained to the mailman, "because after two years in the hospital, they will have their mother home at last."

The mailman congratulated us all and wished Mother and all of us good health and then tactfully left. Papa opened the letter and looked around. We were not all out there on the front lawn.

"Let us go inside where I can read it with everyone present," Papa said.

A terrible horror struck me. Could it be bad news? Did Mother become ill again? "Please God, don't let it be that," I started to pray again, following Papa into the house. He had not seemed disturbed and that was my only hope. But he talked calmly, not excitedly. He had begun to read the letter silently.

"I want to read it with everyone here," I remembered him repeating.

"Dear God, please!" I was pleading silently until we were all gathered around him, waiting patiently for him to begin. Ben Hur was on Papa's lap, playing with the letter.

"You must not tear it," Papa said, and immediately pulled away his little hands and Ben sat quietly on his lap while Papa read a poem Mother had sent for all of us.

THE HOMEWARD TURN

Homeward I turn my longing eyes,
Inside that home happiness lies.
There dwells the love that never dies,
Homeward, homeward my longing eyes.

Homeward I turn my eager face,
Forgetting time, sickness and space,
Near seems the end of my long race,
Homeward, homeward my eager face.

Homeward I turn my weary feet,
Weary of rest, ready to beat
The road that leads where we will meet,
Homeward, homeward, my weary feet.

Homeward I turn my empty arms,
Arms that ached long with wild alarms;
They must shield my loved ones from harms,
Homeward, homeward, my empty arms.

Homeward I turn my wandering thoughts,
Blended with the music that floats
Over my soul in joyful notes.
Homeward, homeward, my wandering thoughts.

But homeward I can't turn my heart,
As from there it never did part.
And how it throbs with a new start.
Homeward, homeward, my hungry heart.

Heavenward I turn my grateful heart,
To Thee, my God, Pure Love Thou art,
A heavenly spark to me impart,
Always heavenward to turn my heart.

Daisy A. Bagdikian

September 1, 1922

Rutland, Massachusetts



CHAPTER 28

Our Cup Runneth Over

It was September 5, Labor Day. Other children were getting ready because schools in Stoneham were to open on September 6. Although we were excited about starting another school in a strange place again, we had another more important and exciting event. Today was the day Mother would be home.

Papa had left early in the morning with a friend who owned a Ford. Not many of our friends had cars, but we were fortunate that this friend had offered to drive Papa to Rutland to bring Mother home.

All the night before I had slept spasmodically.

"Tomorrow this time," I kept saying each time I woke up, "Mother will be home."

I tried to imagine Mother at home, in this house.

"Dear God, thank you," I kept praying.

Finally, I heard footsteps. Papa was up, getting ready to go. I jumped out of bed and ran downstairs, waking the rest of the family. It was not necessary to tiptoe now. Everyone would want to be awakened.

Papa offered a lengthy prayer before breakfast. We listened to every word. Papa always used big, poetic and flowery words, but they always seemed sincere and from the bottom of his heart. Today each word had a full meaning.

As soon as he left, we began to hustle. We had cleaned house

thoroughly the day before, but after breakfast when the dishes were put away, we dusted again and brought flowers from the garden.

Papa had not had a chance to plant a garden but there were plenty of cosmos growing wild outside. They were so dainty.

"Like Mother," I thought.

We had flowers in every room, including Mother's room. The doctor had told Papa that he would discharge Mother from the hospital as a quiescent case only if he and Mother both promised that she would take utmost care not to get tired, that she would have to remain in bed every day for a while until it could be determined how she was reacting to the change of environment. The doctor knew she had five children and was afraid she might do too much and get too tired, but Papa had promised him that for two years the children had been running the house very efficiently, that he had never had a housekeeper. He had convinced the doctor and promised him that Mother would not have to do any work, that work now would seem a pleasure for the children.

The doctor had said Mother could, of course, come downstairs for all her meals, stay outdoors as much as she could, but that she must still continue to rest. Mother had promised all this and asked that only one task be allowed her. She wanted to have her own set of dishes and asked that only she be allowed to wash and sterilize them. This she did faithfully, boiling everything she used.

The house was put in spic and span order. Ben Hur was given his bath and dressed in his best blue rompers, Mother's favorite color. We all wore our best dresses and waited, sitting on the front porch, watching every car coming up Elm Street. There were many "false alarms," but we didn't mind. We were happy even waiting. Nora wanted to run down the street and wait in the corner but we persuaded her to wait with us. She would get her clothes soiled, we said, or they might not see her and pass her by.

"Then you wouldn't be here when Mother arrives," we said, and with that thought, she waited with us.

We could hear the telephone ringing. No one wanted to answer it, fearing we might miss Mother's arrival. But we were afraid not to answer it. It might be from Papa. Did something go wrong?

It seemed whenever no one else wanted to do anything, it became my lot to do it. When I was answering the phone, I heard Nora shouting, "Hurry, Lydia, hurry, they're coming!"

I don't even remember who was calling at this particular time. Like all the others, most likely it was for Papa. Maybe someone wanted to be married, or someone had to be buried. I took the message and in rushing out hit my big toe, so tender and sensitive to touch, against the radiator in the hall.

The excruciating pain made me weep, but by the time I reached the porch, I forgot about the pain and the tears of pain turned into tears of joy.

Mother was home at last.

We were all too excited to eat, but what a joy it was for the entire family once again to be seated at the table, Papa at the head and Mother opposite him, with Ben Hur's high chair next to her. Ordinarily, before meals we would say grace in unison, and join in a family prayer after the evening meal, but tonight Papa wanted to begin the evening meal with a family prayer which meant the reading of the Bible first. On special occasions, we dispensed with taking turns in reading the Bible and praying. Today Papa would lead us.

He read Psalm 95 and other excerpts from several of the Psalms. Every word today seemed to have a particular meaning .

"I cried unto God with my voice. and He gave her unto me. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory. For Thy mercy is great above the heavens. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him...my cup runneth over."

And indeed our cup runneth over. We had all this and Mother too.

After dinner we all went out to walk around the yard. Papa was in his glory showing Mother the yard, what they would do here, and where he would plant certain flowers, where he would plant many trees. I made it a particular point to go to another part of the yard just so I could call "Mother" and have her answer. I made an excuse of calling her attention to a certain shrub or tree only to be able to call "Mother" and excitedly wait for her voice. Yes, at last, she was at

home and she could answer our call. I was a child again and it was delightful!

At dusk that evening we all came into the house again. Ben Hur was getting sleepy and Mother wanted so much to be able to put him to bed. While she took him upstairs to bed, we began to clear the table in readiness to doing the dishes. It did not seem like work anymore. Mother made us promise we would not touch her dishes.

After she put Ben Hur to bed and waited by his bedside until he was fast asleep, she came down, her eyes moist. She took her own dishes and boiled them and put them away with great care.

"I can do it, Mother," I insisted.

"This is the one thing the doctor said I may do," Mother said, "and it seems so good to do a little work at last."

"But the doctor said you are fine now," we reminded her.

"It won't do any harm to be overcautious," she replied, and we watched her perform this task, which she did with joy and thanksgiving.

"I will have one other thing to do," Mother said.

"But you must not do any other work," we reminded her.

"That won't be work at all," Mother said. "I can take care of Ben Hur while Papa is away and all of you are at school- which reminds me, when do schools open?"

We had checked with neighbors and found that schools would open the very next day. However, since the Boston schools were not open yet and we were unable to get our transfer cards, we would have to wait until the following week. Ordinarily, it would have disappointed us to miss school, but now we could be at home with Mother for a whole week.

It was too exciting to go to bed that evening. I was too excited to be able to fall asleep. I wanted to remain awake so that I would not dream and wake up to realize all the joy of this day had been only a dream. But eventually I fell asleep and when I woke up the next morning, I sat up with a start, remembering the events of the day before.

Everyone was stirring in the house except Papa. He had been up since five in the morning, working in the yard. Mother was still

here, awake but in bed. She had promised she would stay in bed today because of a strenuous yesterday, but insisted she would come downstairs for all her meals and do all her dishes each time.

We were en famille again at breakfast and how different it seemed from breakfasts of the past two years. I was glad we did not have to hurry to school today and was not even envious seeing other children passing our house on their way to school. We were having breakfast with our Mother and what the rest of the world was doing did not seem to matter at all now.

After breakfast Mother checked our clothing and made a shopping list for the items we still needed. It seemed wonderful to me to have Mother make out the list. Now I would just have to go to Boston and do the shopping. That task was made easier now. Now I could even tell the saleswoman Mother made out the list. I felt I would deserve greater recognition because Mother was at home and Mother had made out the list.

Tirzah reminded Mother that I should certainly get myself a Ferris Waist now that I was about to enter the eighth grade. Mother put it on the list and I did not object this time. I did not tell anyone what Mrs. Harris had told me.

The first full day Mother was at home ended all too soon, but we didn't mind because on every tomorrow Mother would still be with us.

The next day I was ready to go to Boston to do the shopping. This would be the first time I would be going to Boston since we moved to Stoneham. It would be a much longer ride. Papa gave me instructions on how to get there. Mother wished she could come with me but we all knew she could not.

"Maybe Tirzah could go with her this time," Mother suggested, but Tirzah had a big wash to do and I said I didn't mind. Nora wanted to go with me but I said with double carfare now there was no need for it. Cynthia was nowhere in sight. Papa said since I would certainly be back before 8:30 in the evening, I would not have a very long walk from the car line, since the car would come to the end of the line, which was almost at the foot of Elm Street. Nora walked to the car line and said she would report that I got on

the right car. There was no other car I could have taken, but it seemed nice to have someone see me off on this long trip to Boston.

It was a long ride but I didn't worry that I would get off at the wrong stop because I was to get off at the end of the line—the Sullivan Square Car Terminal. There I took an elevated train marked "Forest Hills." I didn't have to worry about which stop I was to get off until the train went into the subway. I would get off at Winter Street, the third stop inside the subway. From there I walked out and up the subway stairs and was in the heart of the shopping district.

I went to Jordan Marsh Company as usual and was overjoyed in finding the same saleswoman. She even recognized me and the first thing I said was, "Mother is now home!"

She seemed genuinely happy. I then added that since she had to rest for a while, I would still be doing the shopping. She helped me with all the items she could and then took me to another saleswoman for the other items. When I took out my pocketbook to pay her, she warned me to be very careful whenever I opened my pocketbook.

"Little girls don't ordinarily shop and carry so much money," she said. Papa had given me fifty dollars again.

At last I was buying a Ferris Waist. I could still remember the time the ladies of the church had asked me to try one. I had felt hemmed in and cried, "I'm choking, I'm choking!"

When the saleswoman saw "Ferris Waist" on the list, she asked me if I meant a brassiere.

"I think so," I said.

"Is it for you?"

"Yes," I said timidly.

"What size do you wear?"

I had never thought of a size.

"I don't know. I'm a beginner."

She smiled and took several out of a box.

"Come to the dressing room and we'll try them on you," she said. After I had tried several, I said, "I think this will do" and she told

me the size in case I wanted to buy more later. The one she picked out seemed too tight but I took it and said, "Maybe I better take a larger one too."

"But that will be too large for you," she said.

I told her I was getting it for my older sister. "It's not a lie," I rationalized to myself. "It feels better than the one she picked out but if it really is too large for me, Tirzah can have it."

The one she had said was right for me was too tight. I had felt hemmed in again.

One item on the shopping list Mother had not seen. We had added it later as a surprise for her. Papa was in on the secret and was so pleased we had thought of it.

"Be sure it is something blue," the girls said before I left, and Nora had said again when she was waving goodbye at the car line.

We had thought it would be either a blue bed jacket or a blue nightgown. I took more time choosing this item than all the others on the list. I even left Jordan Marsh Company to go to other stores. I went to Houghton Dutton's, Filene's, and Gilchrist's. The one I saw at Gilchrist's I liked best. After I bought it and paid for it, I remembered if I had bought one at Jordan's, I would have been given a ten percent discount. I almost told the saleswoman about the discount I got at Jordan's, but I was too bashful.

"Anyway," I thought, "it's worth paying more. It's for Mother."

I went back to Jordan Marsh Company because I had some money left and I thought all the women folk in the family had something now and that Ben Hur and Papa should have something too. We had not discussed this at home but I knew no one would object. I counted my money to make sure I would have enough carfare to get back. I had to remind myself that it was double fare to Stoneham.

I bought a very cute bib for Ben Hur-blue to match Mother's nightgown, and bought two handkerchiefs for Papa. I then went to the five-and-ten to buy thread and darning cotton. Mother said it would be relaxing for her if, while she sat in bed, she could do our mending and darning. We had protested, but she insisted it would be fun, so she had added several five-and-ten-cent-store items. There

was no five-and-ten-cent-store in Stoneham, so Tirzah had added many other kitchen items. When I got through in this store, my packages seemed bigger than all the other packages I had.

I went to the subway entrance and before I put my dime in, I wanted to make sure I was going toward the right direction. The starter had to help me with my bundles while I went through the turnstile.

"That's a pretty big load for a little girl," he said,

I was thirteen years old but people were still calling me "little girl." I was just as tall, if not taller, than many girls my age, but maybe because I was thin I looked little.

When I reached Sullivan Square I could see the Stoneham car was on the station platform. I ran toward the car and dropped several bundles. I would have half an hour's wait if I missed it. Several people helped me pick up my bundles, the car began to move but the starter blew his whistle and stopped it. The starter and one other man helped me get on the car, seated me, and piled the bundles on my lap.

It seemed so good to sit down again. I was hungry too. When I was in the five-and-ten-cent-store, how good the hot dogs had smelled. I wanted to buy one and went near the counter. But I had so many bundles that I couldn't find a place for a hot dog and I knew I could not manage eating one unless I had both hands free.

This was my second trip to Stoneham. On the first trip we were too excited to watch all the landmarks and we were too busy asking Papa about Mother's coming home and all about the new house. It was not until we reached Spot Pond that Papa had stopped talking to point out the scenery. Now I looked out the window and after a few stops noticed a body of water that I had not noticed before. I found out later that it was the Mystic River and the bridge we crossed over it was the Wellington Bridge. I wondered why it was called the Wellington Bridge. I had heard of the Duke of Wellington defeating Napoleon but I had not heard that he came to this country. This thought occupied me for a while. Then the car seemed to go much faster and as it rounded a bend, some of my bundles fell off my lap. It was all I could do to remain seated.

Then I saw Spot Pond. How beautiful it was. It was also a sign that I was almost home. At Stoneham Square most of the passengers got off and for a while the car didn't move. I knew it was not even close to six o'clock so I had expected the car to go all the way to Farm Hill.

"How can I possibly walk with all these bundles?" I said to myself. I was too bashful to ask the motorman whether or not the car would go to Farm Hill, so I just sat waiting. The motorman just sat waiting also.

"I won't get off till he tells me," I thought. Then an old lady got on the car so I knew the car would go to Farm Hill. Then I remembered Papa had said there was only one track from Stoneham Square to Farm Hill and that one car had to wait for the other to come from Farm Hill before it could get on the track.

Finally I could see a car coming towards us and the two cars passed by on the double tracks in the middle of the Square. I picked up all my bundles. Then I put them all down again when I realized I had another car fare to pay at the end of the line. I took the dimes from my pocketbook and picked up the bundles again. When I reached the farebox, I had to lay the bundles down again, because I couldn't manage the contortion this required.

Before I picked up my bundles again, Nora was on the car helping me with the bundles.

"Gosh, I'm glad you came," I said.

"I've been waiting for about ten hours," Nora said.

"Ten hours ago I was home," I said, knowing what she meant and knowing how she loved to exaggerate. "Where did you wait all that time?"

"I met every car," she said, "and when you were not on it, I went back home, and I came back to meet the next car. Did you buy Mother's present?"

She asked what I had bought her.

"Everything that was on the list," I said.

"Well, I didn't see the list."

"Mostly underwear, long underwear," I teased.

"Well, I won't wear it!" she said.

"Then, you can go to school without any underwear," I said, knowing I was now beginning a game.

"O.K. then," Nora said, "If it's long underwear, I'll wear it and won't wear anything on top of it."

"That's all right," I said, "then I can take back the dress I bought for you to wear over the underwear!"

"Which package? Which package?" she demanded.

By this time we were almost home. We rushed upstairs with the bundles, but first I left Mother's package downstairs. Mother inspected everything I had bought and commended me for my choices.

When Terry saw my bras, she said, "Well, at last."

I didn't tell her I had bought two sizes- not yet.

I showed Mother what I had bought for Ben Hur and the handkerchiefs I had bought for Papa. She was so pleased I had thought of it.

"What about..." Nora began.

"After supper," I whispered, "when Papa is home too."

Mother will think we forgot her, I thought, and could hardly wait till supper.

As soon as Papa came home, he joined us in Mother's room. I gave him the change and an account of my expenditures.

"Handkerchiefs for me?" he said, very much pleased and surprised. "And a bib for Ben Hur — a blue bib."

In a split second Nora was downstairs and up again, with the surprise package.

"For you, Mother," she said.

Mother seemed very surprised. I thought she must have heard me whisper to Nora before, but she had not, I hoped. Everyone knew what it was but they had not seen it yet. I was more pleased with my success in purchasing this item than all the others. Mother began to open the bundle excitedly.

"Guess what it is?" Cynthia said.

"I know what it is," Nora said, but we shushed her.

"Blue!" Mother exclaimed before she even knew what it was. Then when she took it out of the package, everyone talked excitedly.

Before Mother could say another word, Nora said, "Now everyone in the family has something new."

"Beautiful, beautiful," Papa said. He had a habit of repeating adjectives.



CHAPTER 29

School and Thistles

The following Monday, Papa asked me to go with him to Brighton so I could get our school transfer cards while he visited a sick parishioner.

"Don't forget the double carfare," I reminded him, hoping I could be excused for some reason or other. I wanted to stay home to be with Mother as much as possible. But the saving of carfare made no impression, so I made other excuses.

"I should clean house," I said, knowing that my offer to do the cooking would not get me anywhere. Tirzah was a better cook and everyone else seemed to want to do the cooking rather than house cleaning.

"I think you like to clean house," Cynthia said.

"I don't like it any better than anyone else does," I said, beginning to feel like Cinderella. "Anyone who likes to clean house is crazy, but I like the results and since no one else will do it, I do it. But still it doesn't get me out of doing the other things, too," I added, then was ashamed of myself because I didn't want to upset Mother.

"I wish we could find some other way of getting the cards," Mother said, and I felt so happy to think she was trying to help me out. "Maybe they can mail them," she suggested.

"That will delay their entrance to school by a day or two," Papa said.

"School has already been in session four days," Cynthia added.

"Well, then YOU go with Papa," I suggested to her.

"She is too young to go alone," Papa said.

"Two years ago I was the same age, but no one said I was too

young," I reminded him.

"Stoneham is farther," Papa said.

"Well, then, let Tirzah go," I said.

"Tirzah has to do the cooking," he replied.

"Well, I can do the cooking for a change," I said, "and I know what you are going to say, that Tirzah is a better cook. But how am I going to learn to cook if I never have the chance? I always have to do what no one else wants to do, and I am never too young for anything that has to be done."

"Tirzah gets car sick," Papa said.

My head was full of other logic I could enumerate, but I had a bad, or rather, weak habit of crying when I was angry, and I could feel the choking sensation in my throat that preceded the crying spells, so I stopped. I could also see the troubled look in Mother's eyes, so taking the broom and dustpan in my hands, walked out, saying, "Let me know what you decide and in the meantime I might just as well start cleaning house!" Whenever I was hurt or angry, I could do a better job of housecleaning. I seemed to vent my feelings in this manner.

In the midst of my housecleaning, Papa came to say Mother had decided we would telephone for the transfer cards.

"I bet I have to do the telephoning," I was thinking to myself when Papa said, "You telephone the schools and tell them to mail the cards as soon as possible."

I stopped house cleaning long enough to do the telephoning. I had to call the Bennett School for Tirzah's and my cards, the Mary Lyon School for Cynthia's cards, and the Hobart School for Nora's cards. I answered the questions about our new address, name of the schools we were to attend and had a difficult time, as usual, to get across the name of Bagdikian. I said we needed the cards before we could start school in Stoneham. They promised to send the cards as soon as possible.

We watched the mailman come up the street the next day, but what he left did not include our cards.

"If it does not come tomorrow morning," Mother said, "maybe the Stoneham schools would let you start without them."

Papa said Mr. Derian, an Armenian man who had lived in Stoneham for some time, had told him unless we took our transfer cards with us, they would put all of us in the "boat class."

"What is the 'boat class'?" Mother asked.

Mr. Derian said the "boat class" was for all people who came recently on a boat from the old country. He had said they automatically put them in the "boat class" whether they were dumb or smart.

"Well, I won't go in the boat class," Cynthia said. "I'm supposed to get another double promotion."

"I think they better wait for the cards," Papa suggested. "When they see the marks on the transfer cards, they will put them where they belong."

"Maybe we should call the schools and ask them about these things instead of listening to Mr. Derian or other neighbors," Mother suggested.

"The cards should certainly come tomorrow," Papa said.

The cards did not come the next day either. I had to telephone the schools again.

"We'll send them right out," the Principals said, so we knew that they had not even been mailed yet.

Schools in Stoneham had opened on September 6. Our transfer cards from Brighton came on September 14. It was the middle of the morning by the time the cards came, but we had been ready in case they came. We had learned that Nora would go to the North School which included grades one through four. The Center School included grades five and six. The Dean School included grades seven and eight—and the "boat class."

Papa started out with us. Mother stayed home with Ben Hur.

It was such a joy to think Ben Hur would not have to be boarded out while we were in school, and when we returned from school, Mother would be home. We stopped at the North School to leave Nora, since it was the school nearest to our house. We were told that we must go to the Office of the Superintendent of Schools to get admittance cards but that we could leave Nora at the school and bring her admittance card after registering in the Superintendent's

Office. Nora didn't mind remaining there. Papa told the Principal that she was in the third grade and showed her transfer card. Some of the neighbors' children were in the same grade, so Nora didn't feel strange there.

No one said anything about the "boat class" so after leaving Nora there, we all went to the Superintendent's Office in the High School building. Papa told the secretary in the office that we had left Nora at the North School. She looked at her transfer card and at our Stoneham address and said that was the right school and gave the transfer card to Papa to take to the North School. Papa said he had three more children to register and gave her the other transfer cards. She looked at them and said that beginning with the fifth grade there were "divisions" and that we would have to wait until she found out which divisions we would be assigned.

Papa had to go to Boston, so he left us in the Superintendent's Office, taking Nora's transfer card to leave at the North School, and telling the lady that we should all go in the highest division and that Cynthia should be in the seventh grade as she would have had a double promotion — her second double promotion, he added — had we not moved from Brighton.

After Papa left we were given cards admitting Tirzah and me to the Dean School—B Division, and Cynthia to the Center School, grade six, C Division.

"Well, at least it's not the boat class," Tirzah said.

It did seem strange that Cynthia should be put in a division even lower than mine, but we were bashful and didn't question our assignments. We wished Papa had waited, feeling certain he would have persuaded the authorities to give us better assignments.

The Center School to which Cynthia was assigned was next to the Dean School, so she went to that building while Tirzah and I walked into the Dean School. We were placed in the room of the Principal of that building, a middle-aged, mild-looking gentleman. He was very kind, and quietly assigned us seats and introduced us to the class. We had arrived at the school just before the lunch period.

We then went home to lunch. We were not too satisfied with our assignments but this seemed nothing compared to the joy of going

home and finding Mother there. We were too excited to eat. Everyone was telling Mother about her assignment. Nora seemed the only one satisfied. Tirzah and I wondered why we had not been placed in the A division, since our transfer cards had listed our scholarship as A. But the saddest of all was Cynthia. As soon as she came home, she began to sob. She was in grade 6C when she should have been in grade seven. And to add insult to injury, as soon as she had shown her admittance card to the grade 6C teacher, the teacher had said, right out loud, "My goodness, another one" and Cynthia had not felt welcome at all.

"That's just how I felt when I was transferred from the sixth grade at the Mary Lyon School to the seventh grade at the Winship School," I said, by way of consolation. "I think she probably meant the room was already overcrowded," I added.

"Well, if it was overcrowded, why didn't they put me in a better class?" Cynthia asked.

"Never mind," Mother said cheerfully, "just prove to them by the work you do that they made a mistake. Maybe they are just trying you out. If you do good work, they are bound to put you where you really belong. Remember, they did the same thing in Brighton. They tried you out first."

"But we didn't have any transfer cards with A's on them then," we said.

"This is a different school system," Mother replied, "and maybe they want to try you out in their schools instead of going by the records of another school system."

And our assignments that had seemed tragic just a short time ago seemed just a matter of course. How wonderful it seemed to come home and have Mother to talk to, to comfort us in the little tragedies of the day. Yes, this was the first time in two years that we had come home from school and, like other children, found Mother at home.

We went back for the afternoon session with much lighter hearts. Cynthia felt better at the end of the afternoon session. She said the teacher had looked at her cards from Brighton and called her to her desk after school. She had complimented her on her

good marks and said maybe they had put her in the C division because there were no seats in the higher divisions.

The seventh and eighth grades had departmental classes here too, so Tirzah and I had a different teacher for each subject. Our home room teacher, the Principal, was our arithmetic teacher and the only man teacher in the building. Arithmetic was not my favorite subject, but after my few months in the fifth grade without difficulty in Miss Peterson's class, I had overcome my lack of background on the subject and could keep up with the others in the class without difficulty.

I immediately liked my English teacher. I had heard that the history and geography teachers were hard markers but that did not bother me as long as they were fair, and no one had said they were not fair. The literature teacher was also the civics teacher. We had a drawing supervisor who came every other week. When she came, the classes would be held in the civics teacher's room. When the music supervisor came, the classes would be held in the geography teacher's room, and when the penmanship supervisor came, they were held in the history teacher's room.

Our first full day at school was Friday, September 15. We had met all our teachers at the end of that day except the supervisors.

My geography teacher had been very thoughtful. The first time I went to class in her classroom, she pronounced my name correctly. That impressed me. Some of the pupils had said she was a tartar, but I didn't find her so. She was the oldest teacher in the building.

I was accustomed to having respect for age, but somehow old people, especially old teachers, seemed to be the butt of jokes, unjustly so, but why, I didn't know. I always felt this was very unkind, and very foolish, because the very ones ridiculing old people themselves would become old someday, unless they died at an early age, and no one seemed to look forward to such an event. Since the only solution to the prevention of old age is death, I never could understand why so many people seemed ashamed of their ages.

Civics was the subject that followed our geography class. At the end of our geography lesson on that first day in this class, my

geography teacher personally took me to the civics teacher, introduced me to her by name. I thought this was very kind of her. The civics teacher, however, just glared at me and pointed to an empty seat. She yelled at someone in the class. I was not prepared for such shouting and this startled me. The person sitting next to me noticed this and whispered, "Don't mind her. She's a dilly. She doesn't like that kid just because he's French. She hates French people."

I pretended I didn't hear her. I didn't want to get into trouble my first day in this class. Fortunately, the teacher was still lecturing the French boy so did not see or hear the girl in back of me whispering. In all the other classes, the teachers had stopped to give me a textbook. This teacher didn't pay any attention to me. I looked around the class. No one had books. Apparently, she used the lecture method. The "lecture" had begun with her attack on the French boy.

The thought passed through my mind that maybe she was hostile to me because she might have thought I was French, too. I had dark eyes and hair and whenever people tried to guess my ethnic origin, they began with French. My geography teacher, however, had told her my name, so she must have known I was not French—at least not on my father's side, the family name.

Somehow the period ended and it would have been anyone's guess as to the subject Mrs. Thistle was supposed to have been teaching. How aptly named she was, I thought, then remembered that was her married name. Now I wondered what her maiden name was. She was the only married teacher in the building. She had beautiful blonde hair. She had blue eyes and wore glasses. She could have been called attractive had she not been so caustic.

At the close of the period, the girl who had volunteered the information followed me out of the room. "She picks on someone everyday," she said, as if preparing me for what lay ahead. "She has a few pets, though. It won't take you long to find out who they are and why."

Although Saturdays were busy days, I didn't mind the house work any more. Mother's being home made such a difference. She did the mending while she sat up in bed. Sometimes she would take

her sewing in her "steamer" chair, a folding wood-and-cloth chaise, out in the lovely yard. And she continued to do her own dishes, always boiling them.

We would make sure to do our breakfast dishes, make the beds and pick up the house just to make sure that she would not be tempted to do it while we were away. Even Ben Hur seemed to sense that he now had a protector and he did not seem as meek as before. He acted as if now he could face the world without fears.

On the Monday morning following our day and a half of school in Stoneham, I entered Mrs. Thistle's room feeling intimidated. "I wonder on whom she will pick today," I thought, and my question was answered almost immediately. I don't know what that poor little French boy had done this time, but he was again getting a tongue lashing.

"The poor kid," the girl behind me said. The verbal lashing directed at this poor boy was followed by a lecture on manners and culture.

"What does she know about manners," I heard someone near me say, but I didn't dare look around to see who it was. It was very apparent from her talk that most likely the French boy did not come from a cultured home and that most likely there were others in the room who lacked good upbringing.

The only points one could remember from that day's "civics" lesson, in addition to the prejudices of the teacher, was her announcement that every cultured home contains three bottles—the ink bottle, the milk bottle, and the iodine bottle. One could understand that a so-called home with an ink bottle would at least indicate the inhabitants could read and write. But the milk bottle? The iodine bottle? "She's goofy," someone said, and the bell rang.

Supper time was a joy. Now our table was complete, Mother at one end and Papa at the other. Ordinarily I didn't have a chance to put in a word edgewise, but being in Mrs. Thistle's room gave me an interesting topic to discuss. I mentioned the "three-bottle" cultured home. Everyone laughed.

"Are you sure you understood her right?" Papa asked.

"Lydia does not exaggerate," Mother said. "Now, if it were Nora

who said it, we would think it was a joke."

"Ask Tirzah," I said, "anyone who had that teacher would believe it."

Tirzah testified that what I had said was the absolute truth, that it was exactly what Mrs. Thistle had said.

"Mrs. Thistle?" everyone at the table asked.

"Yes," I said, "that's her name, and she does not like French people."

"Why do you say that?" Mother asked.

"Because she picks on a little French boy all the time."

"Does she like Armenians," Papa asked.

"I don't know yet," I said.

"The only ones she likes are people with an American name that come from Maine," Tirzah said.

"What difference does it make from which state they come?" Mother asked.

"I don't know," Tirzah said, "but that's what the girl who sits behind me said. She said Mrs. Thistle comes from Maine and anyone who does not come from Maine will get it sooner or later."

"What do you mean by 'will get it?'" Papa asked.

"That means they will get picked on," Tirzah said.

Papa didn't know yet what "picked on" meant.

"That means," Tirzah explained, "that person will be picked, chosen to get it."

"Get what?" Papa asked.

"Get it — get the dickens," I said, and we all said, "Oh, the Deekins," and went into a gale of laughter, thinking of Mrs. Deekins.

Then Cynthia told about how nice her teacher was now, and for the time being Mrs. Thistle was forgotten.

However, I had occasion to be in the bad graces of Mrs. Thistle. I am sure my geography teacher meant well when she followed me to Mrs. Thistle's room, put her hands on my shoulders, and said to her, "this young lady has seen a great deal of the world and has been the victim of a Turkish massacre."

The newspapers the last few days had been full of news of a massacre in Smyrna. Someone also had told her about our family

and the misfortune we had suffered. During the geography class Miss P. asked me if I had ever been in Smyrna. I had casually answered "Yes," but prior to that she had returned some test papers on which I had received a good mark. She had my test paper in her hand when she followed me to Mrs. Thistle's room. Showing my paper to Mrs. Thistle, she said, "I am sure she will do very well in your classes, too."

"Time will tell," was the only remark Mrs. Thistle made, and I quietly went to my seat, thinking that every other teacher in the building would have made a kinder remark.

The lesson this particular day was not to be civics. We were to have a drawing lesson. The drawing supervisor was there, giving out drawing paper which I learned was called "construction" paper. I was not looking forward to this lesson because drawing was far from being my forte. However, I did not feel ill at ease because the drawing supervisor was a kinder person than Mrs. Thistle and I thought Mrs. Thistle would leave the room and let the drawing teacher teach.

While the drawing teacher was passing us the drawing paper, Mrs. Thistle asked for our attention. "Remember," she said, "there is a right side and a wrong side to the drawing paper. The last time half the class drew on the wrong side. Don't let it happen again."

According to directions, I wrote my name and date in the upper right hand corner, hoping I had selected the "right side" of the paper.

As soon as I finished writing, I looked up, awaiting further directions. I was startled to see Mrs. Thistle at my side. Everyone in class was watching her, waiting for the fox to attack her prey.

She looked at my paper and shouted, "Didn't I tell you there is a wrong side and a right side to this paper!"

Apparently, I had guessed wrong and written on the wrong side. Meekly, I erased my name and date, turned the paper on the other side, and wrote again. When I looked up, Mrs. Thistle was going down the aisle reprimanding others for being so dumb. It felt a little better to feel I was not the only dumb one and sat back feeling a little more relaxed. Suddenly, Mrs. Thistle was at my side again,

looking at my paper.

"You mule," she shouted, "didn't I tell you that you wrote your name on the wrong side of the paper?"

Without stopping to think, I did something I had never done before to any of my teachers—I answered her back.

"My paper has only two sides and I have tried both sides."

The class went into a gale of laughter, but I did not feel at all triumphant. I began to cry. She had called me a "mule." I had heard of people being called "fat" and I was far from being fat. When the laughter died down and everyone saw me wiping my eyes, one could hear a pin drop. The poor drawing supervisor said nothing, but started to draw something on the blackboard. "You mule," Mrs. Thistle repeated, and everyone knew that my goose had been cooked.

I didn't mention this incident at home. I knew I had been fresh in answering back the teacher, even though I felt the provocation justified it. In a way, I was secretly glad of it because I think I went up in the estimation of my classmates. I am sure I did not do it because I had the courage. If I had time to think about it, I would not have done it. I guess Satan just got into me. I knew Papa would have upheld the teacher, even though I could not see how he could feel she was right by calling a pupil a mule.

In my geography class, which always preceded the civics class, Miss Peyton commended me again about a test paper and I was so afraid, lest she say something nice about me again to Mrs. Thistle. As soon as the bell rang, I practically ran out of the room so Miss Peyton would not follow me to Mrs. Thistle's room. Then suddenly I found myself the first person to enter Mrs. Thistle's room. I had worried all night how I would enter her room the next time, whether I should say something, or if she would expel me. Now I had done it without thinking.

I went straight to my desk and wished we had textbooks in this class so I could pretend I was studying my lesson while classmates were coming in. I did not look up until almost everyone was in the room. The atmosphere was foreboding. I think everyone was waiting to see what would happen to me, as this was the first

meeting in her class since yesterday's episode. Fortunately, a visitor sitting behind me came into the room. I did not know then who he was, but the girl whispered, "It's the Superintendent of Schools."

I wondered if she had sent for him to make a spectacle of me. I thought how disappointed Mother and Papa would be if something like this would happen. Then I was sorry I had not mentioned it last night. At least, I would have prepared them for what was to come. Before the Superintendent had a chance to say anything, Mrs. Thistle began to cry. "Look at those blackboards," she said, wiping her eyes, "The janitor has not cleared them once for me. He cleans it for the other teachers."

I sat back relieved and then felt sorry for her, something I thought I could never do. I had never seen a teacher cry before. The Superintendent did not stay long. He did not even sit down to observe. He said something to her, smiled at the class while he crossed to the opposite door, and went out.

During recess I heard that the French boy's parents had gone to the School Committee and the Superintendent of Schools to complain about Mrs. Thistle. They had told them that everyone hated this teacher and that they could bring other witnesses if the School Committee wanted.

I didn't know how the children found out such things. "Did your parents complain too?" one of the girls asked me.

"About what?" I said nonchalantly.

"About yesterday. About her calling you a mule."

"I didn't tell anyone at home about it," I said, as if it was an everyday affair to which I attached no importance.

"No kidding?" she said, very much surprised, and maybe doubting my veracity.

For the next month or so, I had no more trouble with Mrs. Thistle, although I felt that she was holding the trump card, and that someday the axe would fall. I made every effort not to give her an excuse to find fault with me.

The first quarter report cards were issued. I had A in every subject, even arithmetic-except civics. I had failed that subject! The trump card had been played. The axe had finally fallen.

"How can I show this report card at home?" I kept thinking. I took it out of the envelope and looked at it to make sure I was seeing right. I finally gathered up enough courage to go to Mrs. Thistle's room.

"Well, what is it?" she said impatiently as soon as she saw me. I knew she had failed others and I thought there would be many pupils around her desk, but she was alone. Had I been the only one with courage to face her, or was I the fool who entered where angels feared to tread?

"I don't understand..." I began.

"I haven't time to waste on you. Tell me what you want and get out," she said.

I began again, "I don't understand why I failed in civics," I said, very politely and calmly.

"I am the judge of that," she said belligerently.

"May I see my test papers, then?" I asked.

"What test papers? I don't keep any test papers. And, furthermore, young lady, if I had you in geography, I would flunk you in that also."

I stood there, facing her, thinking, "No one will believe this if I should repeat it. I wish someone had been here to hear it. I wonder if she is crazy."

She put on her hat and began to lock her desk, ignoring my presence. I walked out and started for home. The streets seemed deserted. It seemed as if all the children must have run home with their report cards. Maybe they are happier than I was about mine, I thought—at least most of them. I took the report card out of the envelope again and D stood out like a red light warning of danger. Suddenly, I did something I had never done. I tore it into bits and scattered the remains.

Papa was not at home when I arrived. The minute I entered the house, I could contain myself no longer. I wept as if my heart had broken. How nice it seemed to have Mother there. I would have died, I thought, if she had not been there. I told her what had happened, what Mrs. Thistle had said about failing me in geography, too, if she had me in that subject.

"I wish someone had been there to hear it. No one will believe such a thing," I sobbed.

"I believe you," Mother said, "because I have never known you to exaggerate."

Then I told her about the drawing paper incident, about her calling me a mule.

"Why didn't you tell me this before?" Mother asked.

"I didn't want to worry you," I said.

"What is a Mother for if she cannot listen to the troubles of her children?" Mother said. Then she asked me about my other teachers. "Do you like them?" she asked.

"They are all wonderful except this one," I said.

"Just think," Mother said, "how much worse it would be if you liked just one teacher and all the others were terrible as you say Mrs. Thistle is. Did you ever stop to think why she is as she is?"

I was surprised at this question.

"Could it be possible that Mother knows some thing about this teacher that I don't?" I thought.

"You will find out as you grow older," Mother continued, "that only unhappy people make others unhappy. You will feel sorry for such people rather than hate them. This teacher must be a very unhappy teacher."

"But she has no reason to be unhappy," I said.

"How do you know?" Mother asked, surprised.

I said, "I know she is happily married."

"How do you know that?"

"Because she has an unselfish husband," I said.

"How do you know she has an unselfish husband?" Mother was still more surprised.

Then I told her about so many things I had not repeated because they sounded fantastic and because there had been more excitement at our house recently and as soon as I arrived home from school, I had put Mrs. Thistle out of my mind.

Uncle Fred, Mother's youngest brother whom she had not seen for over ten years, had arrived at our house. Uncle Fred had gone West to live with Grandmother, who had remarried and was now

living on a ranch in Helena, Montana. The last time Mother had seen her own mother and Uncle Fred was in 1912 when they had left for America.

When we arrived in this country, I know Mother was disappointed that her own mother had not come from Montana to see her, but she made excuses for her by saying Montana was so far away, and it really was very expensive to travel. I knew deep in her heart she was hurt, but when Uncle Fred came because he wanted to see her, she had been overjoyed.

We loved Uncle Fred and were all happy that he was going to live with us. He was tall, dark, and handsome, and the wittiest person I had ever known. We could hardly wait for weekends when we would all be home and he would tell us tales of the West, and Montana particularly. He bought a Victrola and many records. He loved music and had a beautiful baritone voice. We thought that someday he would be a great singer.

He seemed much older than we, although we just thought so at that time. Twenty-one seemed quite old to us then. He had come shortly after his twenty-first birthday which was on October 14. Uncle Fred's coming had put school in the background and Mrs. Thistle had not occupied my mind very much—not again until today.

Mother was surprised when I told her about our civics lessons. I knew she found it hard to call the type of "lectures" we had lessons in civics. Mrs. Thistle told us all about her honeymoon and the first day they came to their new home. The first time she had prepared breakfast for her husband, she told us she cooked two eggs — a small one and a large one.

"I put the eggs on the table," she had told us, "and waited, waited to see which one my husband would take. Then he took the small one and I knew he was not selfish."

I heard one of the boys who sat near me whisper, "He probably would have his head cut off if he had taken the large egg."

Then, I think Mrs. Thistle felt she was giving too much credit to her husband, so she continued to tell us about his other habits. She said she had to get after him to wash the bathtub after he took his bath. Stories like this made up our civics lessons. She was teaching

us cleanliness.

Mother listened to me, amazed. Then Tirzah came in and again confirmed what I had said.

"She must be a very unhappy woman-and sick," Mother said. "I want you to promise me, Lydia, that you won't hate her. Hatred cripples one's soul and does more damage to the hater than the one hated. Please, dear, remember that, and tomorrow ask for another copy of your report and we'll sign it and say no more. I know it seems very serious to you now, but someday you will laugh about this, and you will feel sorry for people who are unhappy and make others unhappy. Just make believe that whatever she does, she does not because she hates you but because she herself is unhappy and thinks her unhappiness will be lessened by making others unhappy also. If you look at it this way, you will soon be sorry for her and will overlook the things she does. And remember the good marks you received and the good teachers you do have."

The next day, my home room teacher gave me another copy of my report card. He looked at the "D" and I thought he was going to say something, but he did not. I saw him shake his head, though, when he handed me the card.

"I couldn't find out why I received a 'D'" I said, very calmly, remembering Mother's words. He probably thought I was a very phlegmatic person and lacked the spirit to be angry. I had not told him how my report card had been destroyed. I had just said it had been destroyed, and he had not asked me how. I was going to tell him if he had asked. Now I was glad I did not have to explain it. When I left school that day with the second copy of my report card, although that same red "D" was there, somehow it did not bother me anymore. It seemed to tell me that a sick woman gave it to me. Mother had said in life one would always find such sick people and the best we could do was be thankful that we were not the ones with a sick heart or a sick soul, and to pray that such sickness does not befall us.



CHAPTER 30

*And Now Father
at Risk*

The signing of the report card with a "D" was an insignificant matter compared to what had befallen Papa the night before. I don't even remember whether it was Mother or was Papa who signed it. All I remembered was that Mother had certainly been right. The spirit of hatred and revenge did cripple one's mind and soul

I don't know whether Mother and Papa would have told me what happened had I not overheard part of the conversation when I had gone in with my report card. I had been so anxious to show Mother I could bring this report home and show it to her and Papa without any bitterness, that I had walked right into their room without knocking, a thing that I had never done before.

Mother was weeping, and Papa was holding her hands, saying, "The best thing to do is to ignore the whole matter."

When I apologized for my intrusion and said anxiously, "Mother, I hope you are not ill again," Mother said, "Not ill of body, but ill of heart and spirit."

To Papa she said, "Let's tell her and Tirzah but not the younger ones."

My heart sank. "Call Tirzah," Papa said, "but don't let the others know we have sent for you. They are busy playing the new records Uncle Fred brought, so they don't need to know. Tell Tirzah to come up for a few minutes."

I tried to be as calm as humanly possible and whispered to Tirzah

that Papa and Mother wanted her to go to their room. I followed her, saying I was wanted also.

"What's wrong?" Tirzah asked as soon as she saw Mother's eyes.

"Sit down, my girls," Papa said, and began to relate the incident of the evening before.

"First of all," he said, "we have decided not to tell anyone what happened. The only reason I told your Mother was that we do not hide anything from each other and because I was afraid the person responsible for what happened might tell someone and it might reach Mother in a distorted way. You must promise not to be upset and not to tell anyone because I feel very sure that what happened will never happen again. The persons who planned the plot could never have it happen again because they are cowards and they will know now that I am in a position to have them arrested. I shall not do so but because they will never know whether or not I shall do it, they cannot rest in peace. If they are repentant Christians, they will come to me and ask for forgiveness. If they are not, God shall be their Judge, not I."

The words "plot" and "arrest" set my mind awlirl.

"I will have to go back to those black days in Marash for you to understand what happened last night." Papa faced Tirzah and said. "You and Lydia may remember that a few weeks before the day the firing of guns began in Marash several men came to see me. I don't know whether or not you remember that they left in anger, threatening me if I did not do what they asked of me. They wanted money from me. They said I was a rich man and they wanted money from me with which to buy ammunition to kill the Turks of Marash. I told them I would have no part in anything that would start a massacre. They said they knew that as soon as the army of the occupation withdrew, the Turks would begin to kill the Armenians, so they wanted to start killing the Turks before they started killing the Armenians.

"I told them I agreed with them that as soon as the army of the occupation withdrew, there would be trouble, and that I would be the first one to go and bring the ammunition myself if and when the army of the occupation were to leave, but that I would not be a

party to bloodshed otherwise. I promised them that I would keep in touch with the leaders of the occupation army and as soon as I found they were to leave, I would go to Adana and ask General Crawford there for help, that I would pay for the ammunition from my own pocket.

"They were stubborn. They did not want to wait until then. They wanted to start killing the Turks. I tried to persuade them that was not the Christian way to act, that we could not take the offensive. I said we would be no better than the Turks they hated if we used their tactics. The men left in disgust, but came back a few days later. This time they threatened to kill me if I did not listen to them. They were men with hatred in their hearts. They were letting their hatred for the Turks spread to hatred for everyone.

"I told them I could not stop them from killing me, but that dying that way would be better than having the blood of hundreds of people not only Turks but the Armenians who would be killed also, on my hands and heart.

"I kept my promise that when the time came, I would go to Adana for help. You may remember the night I took Mother to the hospital just before Ben Hur was born and then came back and after midnight left with a few other men. I had learned officially that the French Army was to withdraw without warning. I was captured on the way, and the only thing that saved me was that I spoke in English and pretended I could not understand Turkish. The fact that I did not have a mustache made the Turks think I was a European and not an Armenian.

"God spared me that time, and I continued to Adana where General Crawford supplied me with 1,000 Algerian Senegal soldiers. Five hundred volunteer Armenians joined us also. I bought ammunition with my own money, and, as you will remember, the massacre began after we returned with the soldiers and ammunition. Everyone did not know it then, but they do now, that we had almost won the war, that the Turks had begun surrender terms, but, alas, the French soldiers received word from Paris to withdraw immediately.

"When the Turks heard this, they renewed their massacre,

knowing that without the army of occupation, we could not withstand them for very long. You know the rest of the sad story. We were almost the victors, but almost is not enough. When the whole affair did not end in victory, these few men blamed me. They said if I had listened to them, this would not have happened. I knew better. We could not have won anymore than when the army of occupations left.

“The difference would have been that we started it and the whole world would have blamed us. I know I did the right thing and have never regretted it. However, these few men—there are five of them—had taken an oath to follow me wherever I went and to kill me. Some of them came to this country about the same time we did. I thought they would be thankful to God that they were saved and would forget their revengeful hatred, but hatred has a way of feeding oneself. It spreads like a disease — it is a disease. They thought they would lose their honor if they did not carry out their threat. They called their wicked promise, “honor.”

I sat spellbound, not being able to imagine what this had to do with what had happened last night. I didn't even know yet what had happened last night. Papa continued.

“You may remember that a few months after Mother went to Rutland, just as we thought she was getting better, she had a setback. These five wicked men were the cause again. I did not tell you then what they did, but I will tell you now.

“You may remember that one day I went to the State House to see Governor Cox. I did not have an appointment and I was told I could not see him. I told the secretary it was a matter of life and death, that I must see him. I did have a chance to see him and told him what had happened. The Superintendent of the hospital had received a petition signed by five men—I could have guessed who they were—saying that there was a patient there, and they gave Mother's name, who should not be a public charge. They said her husband was a rich man, not yet a citizen and that according to law, he should either pay for her hospitalization or be deported.

“The Superintendent of the hospital was most kind and deplored what these men had done. He had mentioned it to one of the

doctors who had questioned Mother. Mother, too, had realized who did this despicable thing, and had become very ill that night."

Papa said the Superintendent of the hospital had sent for him and explained the whole thing. Papa asked who the men were, but the Superintendent had been reluctant about sharing the petition. He had, however, advised Papa what to do after Papa convinced him that he was no longer a rich man. Papa had taken out his first citizenship papers right away, and he had to wait the regular compulsory five-year period before he could apply for his final papers. According to law, the petition had been referred to the immigration department.

Because Papa used to help his parishioners apply for their citizenship papers and would go with them when they went to be examined, he knew the procedures and knew some of the officials by name. When he went to them about this crisis, they were most kind but said he would need the Governor's aid to settle this matter, to prove that he did not have the money to pay for months and months of hospitalization, not knowing how long a period Mother would be there. And as for being deported, they might as well line up his family and shoot them down as to deport them to Turkey.

Papa had told Governor Cox when he went to see him, "I am ashamed to say that these men who are persecuting me are of my own nationality."

"We have traitors in every land, even in America," the Governor said, "and human beings are the same the world over. We hope, however, that we have less than the world's share here."

The Governor sent for the man to whom the petition had been forwarded. The man, thinking Papa already had been shown the list before he received it, showed it to Papa. The names on it were of those five men.

Papa was, of course, able to prove the state of his finances. There were many people, both Armenians and Americans who had known him in Turkey, who could attest to this. He could easily prove that he had his first citizenship papers, and the matter was settled without Papa's having to pay the State of Massachusetts for Mother's hospitalization at the State Sanatorium. Nor was there any

deportation. It must have been a blow to the five men that their scheme had failed. The only satisfaction they could have had from their knavery was the anxiety they had caused and the setback in Mother's health.

"To show you how deep vengeance and hatred can be ingrained," Papa continued, "a few months ago, these men tried something else. It must have been when they heard that Mother was coming home. I had not told her this before, but I told her after what happened last night because she knows now that they have tried everything, and they must know that their next move would destroy them. They do not know I know they signed that petition, they do not know for sure that I guessed from whom the anonymous letters came, threatening my life. I think they know that they cannot frighten me because what happened a few months ago must have proved it."

I was anxious to know not only what had happened last night but what had happened a few months ago.

"I received anonymous letters saying if I appeared in church, the following Sunday of the letter, they would shoot me right at my pulpit. I did not tell anyone, but I went to church as usual. Nothing happened. I watched the congregation to see if there were strange faces. The church was just the same. People who send anonymous letters are cowards. If they were not, they would sign their names. It must be frustrating to threaten someone and promise violence and then not be able to boast about it. It is a serious crime in this country to send anonymous threatening letters. I could have proved who had been sending them, but I am a minister and I did not want any reprisal. I turned the other cheek, but last night they tried something else."

"Please, Papa, what happened last night?" Tirzah and I asked anxiously.

"Last night," Papa said, "when I got off the streetcar late at night at Stoneham Square, I crossed the street the way I generally do to get home, walked down the west side of Main Street and turned the corner on Church Street in order to get to Central Street and walk home from there. Just as I turned into Church Street, across from

the Congregational Church, from behind one of the houses a man emerged in the dark. He called me by name.

"He said, 'I have been waiting for you each night for several days.'"

Papa said he asked, "Who are you?"

"I cannot tell you," the man said.

"I can tell you are an Armenian," Papa said, "but I do not recognize you, so apparently you are not from one of my churches. Now, what can I do for you?"

"This," the man said, pointing a gun right against my heart.

Mother was sitting up in bed, but with this, she leaned against the pillow.

"As if my children had not suffered enough," she said.

I almost asked, "Did he shoot?" but realized how ridiculous that would be. After all, Papa was here telling us about it.

"What happened then?" Tirzah asked.

Papa continued.

"You have a gun, and I do not," I said to the man. "Go ahead and shoot, but before you do, I want you to give a message to the men who hired you to kill me."

The man was so startled, Papa said, that he suddenly withdrew the gun, then thinking better of it, pointed it at Papa again.

"Don't be afraid," Papa had said to him, "I won't take the gun from you and shoot you. The gun is still in your hands. What are you waiting for? Are you another Judas who has offered to kill for a few dollars? How much did these five men offer you for this job? I feel sorry for you, for your weakness to be led by wicked men, for money that will be of no use after you have brought disgrace on you and your family, if you have a family. Your family and your countrymen will be ashamed to say you were an Armenian."

Papa said the man stood motionless, then his hand went limp, and he put the gun away. Finally, with a trembling voice he began to speak.

"I had heard about how courageous a man you are, about the dangerous missions on which you went to save the people of Marash, but instead I believed the men who hired me to do this

deed. I thank my God that he held back my hands at the last moment. I could never shoot a man with your courage."

"Do you know what dangers befall you when you tell them you did not kill me?" Papa asked him.

"I will tell them they are liars," the man said, getting excited and raising his voice.

"You had better not talk so loud," Papa said, "or someone will hear you. You can walk down the street with me and tell me what you have to say."

So, like a friend, he had walked part way with him, apologizing to Papa and cursing the men who almost made him commit a crime.

"They are the cowards," he went on. "Why didn't one of them try this? I will tell them they are liars, that you are the most courageous man I have known."

"What do you think they will do to you?" Papa had asked him again.

"I don't care even if they threaten to kill me," he said, "I will do what you did. I will tell them to go ahead and kill me. I have no family, so they cannot hold that over my head. I'll tell them I have already told several people and that if anything happens to me or to you, they will be found out. I'll tell them you guessed who sent me. I'll tell them how courageous you were and make them feel ashamed."

Then, Papa said, the man stopped abruptly, extended his hand to shake hands with Papa, and asked his forgiveness.

"God has been with you this night," Papa told him, "and made me shake hands with the same hand that held the gun to shoot me. I don't know who you are, and I don't want to know, so depart and from this day forward turn your heart to God and let your hands do God's work, not the work of wicked men."

I felt limp when Papa ended the incident.

"Who are the five wicked men?" Tirzah asked.

"Yes, who are they?" I wanted to know, too.

Before Papa had a chance to say anything, Mother said, "I hope you will never find out. It will be best if you never know. You will

subconsciously hate them when you find out, and you know what hatred can do. Promise you will never try to find out, and Papa and I will promise we will never tell."



CHAPTER 31

*A Red “D” and
Mother’s Departure*

I returned my signed report card the next day and that red “D” which had represented to me the vengeance of an unfair woman had no significance anymore. I remembered it only as an incident in my life, with no feeling of hatred, for now the thing I feared most was hatred itself, how it could sear the souls of men and I never wanted to hate anyone. I had learned that hatred sinks us even lower than those we hate.

If anything unpleasant happened at school or elsewhere, it seemed of very little import, because to find Mother at home dispelled all gloom and fear, even though a little sadness had crept in lately because Mother did not look as well as when she first came home. The recent threat, although it had not hurt physically, made us live in retrospect some of the horrors of the past.

It was not easy to forget, especially when five men dedicated to hatred and vengeance tried to revive the embers of a holocaust we all wished to forget. Mother had convinced me that if I weighed any unpleasantness by Mrs. Thistle against things done by all the nice teachers, Mrs. Thistle’s acts would be minimized.

I also realized that I was not Mrs. Thistle’s only target. There were others in the class on whom she inflicted some of the unhappiness that must have been within her. I found it a source of great inner satisfaction therefore, when I went to her class each day without further intimidation and with a feeling of tranquility. It became just

one of those things in life that one must do without wanting to do it or without enjoying it. It became a challenge to sit in this classroom and wait to see what an unhappy person does to thirty or forty children entrusted to her care.

Whenever she made remarks that hurt someone in the class, I would say to myself that Miss So-and-So would never say that. Maybe if she had not been a married woman, I might have thought as others often did that single people were frustrated, but Mrs. Thistle was an example of persons subject to frustrations regardless of what their lot in life seemed to be. The other teachers in the building, both young and old, seemed better adjusted to life. They did not use their pupils to vent their feelings and disappointments if they were disappointed in life as Mrs. Thistle had been.

I did the best work I could in her class and went in and out of the room as inconspicuously as possible. When she asked questions and I knew the answers, I raised my hand, but she never called on me. On one or two occasions, when my hand was the only one up, she ignored it. Thereafter even if I knew the answer, I did not raise my hand. On one such occasion she called on me even when I had not volunteered. Fortunately, or maybe unfortunately, I answered the question correctly even though she did not acknowledge it as such but rephrased my reply to give the impression that I had not given the correct answer.

Thereafter I neither volunteered nor was I called upon. If she flunked me because I didn't volunteer, I thought, I could accept it with total indifference now. What happened in school was only a fleeting, unimportant phase of my life now, although all teachers and pupils alike were above reproach, and Mrs. Thistle each day seemed to be more and more of a nonentity compared to what was happening at home. Mother was again very ill.

It was Christmas, and Mother was with us. For that we were most thankful. From a couch we had brought into the dining room, Mother watched us decorate the Christmas tree. She insisted on sitting at the table with us for our Christmas breakfast, but had to lie down on the couch again while we opened our gifts. Just to have her with us, even though ill, added a note of cheer to our Christmas.

The day after Christmas the doctor came. We waited outside the door and when he came out of the room with Papa, we heard him say he would arrange right away to have her go back to the sanatorium. After the doctor left, we all went to Mother's room. We knew she had been crying, but was now trying to comfort us when she told us she must go away again. She asked Papa to try to find someone in Stoneham who would take care of Ben Hur.

"We will never let him go away again," we said. Papa promised to call Mrs. Warren of the Children's Aid Society who might have a list of people in Stoneham who might want to take care of children. I was happy that this was our Christmas vacation week and we did not have to go to school. We would be home all day with Mother. We could wait on her and just have her there when we needed her.

I prayed faithfully each night, wondering what we had done wrong that this fate should befall us. Was I asking too much from God? Then each day in the newspapers I would read of tragedies happening to other families also and would pray to have more understanding and faith. The eleventh chapter of St. Mark, verses twenty-three through twenty-six I had memorized long ago. If having faith would make Mother well again, then I must have faith, a faith that could move mountains, and with this faith I waited patiently, again delegating the responsibility of Mother's well-being to God.

The Christmas holidays were over and it was time for us to go back to school. Mother was not well enough to take care of Ben Hur, so Papa tried to stay home until we returned from school. Mrs. Warren had the name of a woman who took care of State wards who would be glad to take care of Ben Hur while we were in school, but as long as Mother was at home, she could not bear to have him taken away every morning.

"I have such a short time left at home," she said.

"I'll stay home until Mother has to go," I volunteered.

"I'll arrange so I can be at home until you come home from school," Papa said. "In case of emergencies, we can make other arrangements."

It was understood that Ben Hur would not be taken away each

day until Mother actually went to the sanatorium. The day she was to leave was not yet definite. If she had to go, she said, she hoped it would be back to Rutland because her doctor, Dr. Hubbard, and the sanatorium superintendent, Dr. Emerson, had been so kind to her.

"It will seem like a second home to me," she said.

When the doctor told her that she would have to go to whichever sanatorium had the first vacancy, she was saddened but still hoped it would be Rutland. Somehow we managed to keep Ben Hur at home as long as Mother was at home.

It was January 8 again, Cynthia's and my birthday. How happy I was that Mother was home even though she would be leaving soon. I secretly prayed and hoped that she would be home for Ben Hur's birthday also. He would be three on January 30. His first and second birthdays had been without her.

Tirzah baked a cake for Cynthia and for me. We had twenty-six candles for our combined ages. Ben Hur jumped up in his high chair and wanted to blow the candles, and we encouraged him to do it. I think everyone feared silently that maybe we should observe his birthday today, too, in case Mother was not home on January 30, but no one gave tongue to the thought.

Mother had come downstairs for supper because of this special occasion but she had to go right up to bed again. Her joining us at a meal had been like a ray of sunshine through the clouds that had been gathering.

The doctor came to see Mother frequently and one day, toward the end of January, he brought the news that she must leave immediately.

"To Rutland?" Mother asked hopefully.

"To Lakeville State Sanatorium in Middleboro," the doctor replied.

"May I wait until after January 30?" Mother asked him. We all knew why.

"No," the doctor said, "for your sake and your children's."

"Yes, of course," Mother said and accepted the ultimatum.

"He didn't even ask why the 30th," I thought. "I would have asked, out of curiosity if not out of interest."

Maybe I was too young to realize that doctors have to be

objective, but from my own experience in so many hospitals and with so many doctors, how well I know that it helps when a doctor takes, or at least shows, a personal interest in his patients.

On January 27, ever so near the 30th, Mother left for Lakeville Sanatorium. Uncle Fred took her in his Franklin automobile. We kissed Mother on the forehead. I tried not to cry but I couldn't help myself. Even Tirzah was crying, and then Mother began to cry. Now everyone was crying except the men folks, which included Ben Hur. He was saying "Bye, bye," and how I envied his inability to understand. I am sure that Papa and Uncle Fred were crying inaudibly and invisibly, and I wondered why women cried more often and more easily. Maybe in this respect alone they are "the weaker sex," and maybe this "weakness" loosens tensions and makes them the stronger for a few more years on earth.

How aptly someone named Albert Smith put it when he said "Tears are the safety-valves of the heart when too much pressure is laid on it."

It was a Saturday when Mother left. As soon as the car was out of sight and before my tears had dried, I ran in the house to write her a letter. She would get it on Monday.

What can one write at a time like this? I began:

"Dear Mother, If you were writing this letter, you would know just what to say... In a few days I will have more news, and I will write faithfully and regularly. I hope your trip in Uncle Fred's car was comfortable. I will write you all about Mrs. Alden as soon as we meet her. Please let me know if you need to have any shopping done. I don't mind the ride to Boston at all. Maybe I won't even have to go to Boston for some items. There is a Mrs. Delaney who has a dry goods store here in Stoneham, and she has many items in her store. She is the one who always used to ask how you were—before you came home from Rutland and while you were home. I am sure she, too, will be unhappy to hear that you are in the hospital again.

"Please, don't worry about us. I remember when I was about eight years old you said you wanted us to learn how to cook, to do house work, and to be self-reliant and resourceful because the day

might come when we would not have any maids. You said you wanted us to be prepared for life. I really don't mind not having a maid, and I will never be afraid of hard work if only God will make you well and send you home again. I will pray faithfully and I will have faith. I don't know if I told you that I had already memorized that part of Chapter eleven of the Gospel of St. Mark about the power of faith.

"And please, Mother, believe me when I say that I have 'ought against any' as the Bible says—not even 'ought' against Mrs. Thistle. I am always sure that whatever she says won't hurt me anymore because I will always remember what you said, that only unhappy people make others unhappy. I don't know what makes Mrs. Thistle unhappy, but knowing that she must be helps me not to hate her. The other pupils call her names but I never do—not even when she called me a mule.

"The thought just occurred to me at this moment that maybe she called me that because her husband might have called her that because when I looked up the meaning of that word after she called me that—I don't mean the real meaning but the other meaning the dictionary said 'An obstinate person.' I realized I had been sarcastic when I answered her back about my paper having only two sides, but I would not have called that being stubborn or obstinate.

Even Papa always says I am the least stubborn of his children.

"Well, anyway, I just want you to know that I will have faith without having 'ought against any.' Ben Hur is pulling at my sleeves now so I will stop writing and will take him for a walk while I go to the mail box to mail this letter. Maybe it will be the first one you will receive. And please, Mother, don't feel you should answer our letters because we do not want you to get tired. Please get well for our sakes.

"With love from all of us, Your loving daughter, Lydia."

We did not see Papa until Sunday morning. Uncle Fred had taken the day off in order to be able to drive Mother to Middleboro. After they left her, he had driven Papa to visit several of his parishioners who were in the hospital or confined to their homes.

How true it was that keeping busy was the best antidote for sorrow and grief. Papa's salvation would be his busy life with two churches as well as the sorrows of others to whom he must administer help and encouragement.

Papa always arose at 5:00 o'clock. On Sundays in the quiet atmosphere of the house and the neighborhood, he would review his sermons. On other days, he would be outdoors in his garden. Even in the winter he found work in the yard. On stormy days he would have the sidewalk and the very long driveway shoveled even before the milkman arrived. He should have been a farmer everyone said, and I am sure he would have been the ideal one.

As soon as I heard Papa get up on this particular Sunday, I too got up to ask question. "Was Mother pleased with the hospital? With her room? Was the ride comfortable?"

I was trying to keep up a conversation because I felt so sorry for Papa because he was again without his wife. I felt like comforting him but did not know how to go about it. I think subconsciously I was trying to comfort myself, too.

The Monday after Mother left, Tirzah and I took Ben Hur to the home where he would stay when we were in school, Mrs. Alden's home on Pomeworth Street. I realize now that Mrs. Alden probably was not over fifty then, but we thought she was a very old lady. As soon as we saw her, though, we knew she would be very good to Ben Hur. When we left him, he began to sob and I wished he would just cry out instead, but he never did. He would be three years old the next day, and he seemed to understand whenever we tried to explain something to him. We told him first that Mrs. Alden would take care of him just for a few hours and that we would be back for him after school. It seemed that he understood us.

Mrs. Alden took his hand and said they would stand in the doorway and wave to us. We practically walked backwards all the way up the street, waving to him, and then we turned the corner and were out of sight. It was not too much out of our way to leave Ben Hur with Mrs. Alden on our way to school.

Our house was again empty when we went home to lunch. Papa had to go to Boston to help an old man from one of his churches

who was going to try for his second citizenship papers and, of course, Mother was not there anymore. All day at school, I thought of Mother and how she would be thinking about us. I knew that as soon as I got home, I would write her a letter about Mrs. Alden. We stopped at her house to get Ben Hur.

I could tell just from looking at him that he had been happy there. Mrs. Alden took care of children they called "state wards"—some almost as young as Ben Hur and some in High School. When I found out what was meant by "state wards" I was horrified and thanked God that no matter what had happened to us, we were not state wards, that we had a Mother and a Father who loved us.

Someone at school said one of the children in school who was a state ward had a Father and Mother but they had not wanted him. I could not imagine how there could be such parents. That night I prayed to God to be good to all the state wards. I also wrote to Mother and said I was sure Ben Hur would be very happy at Mrs. Alden's and how lucky we were that we could bring him home each night and we would be with him all day on weekends.

I wanted to tell her about the state wards, but I was afraid it would make her sad, too, so I did not mention it. When I began to write the letter to her, I started to write the date—January 29, and realized that she would receive it the next day—January 30, Ben Hur's third birthday.

The paper looked blurry and a tear drop blotted the date. I tore the paper and began again and left out the date, as if Mother would forget such an event—Ben Hur's third birthday and she would again not be at home. She had not been home for any of his birthdays. I wished she had been at home for this occasion instead of Cynthia's and my birthday a few weeks before she left.

When we called for Ben Hur after school the next day, we mentioned casually to Mrs. Alden that it was his birthday. She said she wished she had known about it. We tried to be cheerful about it that evening and did have a cake with three candles on it. When we went home at noon, there was no mail from her. No one said anything, but we knew she was very ill. Papa was away during the day but he came home early that evening so he could be home with

us. Fortunately, no one called him for a funeral or wedding.

Just before we sat down for supper, a telegram came. It was from Mother and it read, "Happy Birthday to my dear Ben Hur and love to all my dear ones." We knew she must have asked a nurse to send it because she was too ill, but we were happy even for this.

Then Uncle Fred came home unexpectedly. Generally, we were in bed when he came, but he had remembered this was Ben Hur's birthday. We shouted with joy because we were always gay when he was with us. He always had such wonderful stories to tell about his experiences. Today he had a surprise for all of us. He had a large package. It was too large to put on the dining room table. He had a smaller package for Ben Hur, but he said the larger package was a gift for all of us. We all tried to guess what it was, and when he opened it we chorused "A phonograph!"

He had bought several records also, so we played them all. My favorite the "Meditation" from *Thais* and Handel's "Largo."

Uncle Fred's living with us while Mother was away was a godsend. There was never a dull moment when he was home. We wished he could be home with us for supper every evening, but his work took him away many evenings, since he was driving a Greyhound bus. Sometimes he went to New York or other distant points and sometimes he was a lecturer on the sightseeing tours around the most interesting points around Boston, like Concord and Lexington. He had stories to tell about the people who took the trips on the sightseeing tours. We would tease him to repeat some of his lectures. My favorite one was the lecture on Madam Jack Gardner's Palace.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," he would say, "every stone in this palace was brought from the original edifice in Italy, and Isabella Gardner had this building rebuilt exactly like the original one. Even the two lions you see at the entrance are the ones brought from Italy. These are the second pair of lions she had brought from Italy. The original lions were two thousand years old, but they did not please Mrs. Gardner, so she had some new ones made that were three thousand years old."

One day Uncle Fred brought one of the other drivers with him.

He said he wanted his favorite friend from the bus lines to meet us all. His friend, Mr. George Bailey, was as funny as Uncle Fred. He brought a monkey that one could wear as a glove and make the monkey do tricks. He gave it to Nora which was a dangerous thing to do because she took it to school and upset the entire class. But the thing that amused me most was the act George Bailey and Uncle Fred would put on for us which was called "Dinny, Turn the Crank." Tirzah and I were old enough to understand but Cynthia and Nora were a little too young to understand the play on words.

We would make Uncle Fred repeat this when we had certain of our friends in. I would double up from laughing until my sides ached. George would pretend he was operating a magic lantern slide show and Uncle Fred would begin the "lecture" while we, the audience, sat silently listening to every word he uttered.



CHAPTER 32

*Thistles and Pink
Carnations*

Soon after Mother went to Lakeville, we had a special “civics” lesson in Mrs. Thistle’s class. She announced the our class would publish The Dean School Gazette and that we would now elect an Editor-in-Chief, Assistant Editors, Fashion Editor, etc. She appointed tellers to pass out ballots for voting and to count ballots. Before we voted she gave a lecture on the type of candidates who should be selected. She had already selected the name of the paper so we did not have to vote on that. She told us about the Australian ballot and said we would now vote secretly for candidates who were qualified. She appointed a teller for each office for which we were voting. Apparently, the teller who collected the ballots for the Fashion Editor was the first to count the votes

“Who is to the fashion editor?” Mrs. Thistle asked.

The tellers named the girl and everyone applauded. She was one of the brightest girls in the class. When the applause faded, everyone waited for remarks from the teacher.

“Well, I guess you have a lot to learn about voting,” began Mrs. Thistle. “Take a look at her,” pointing, “she does not even know how to dress. Why didn’t you pick someone who dresses better?”

There was complete silence in the room. All eyes were turned toward the newly elected Fashion Editor. She was blushing, but not anymore than the other members of the class. After my first automatic glance at this girl, who was one of the girls with whom I

played at recess, my attention was turned to the teacher.

"Surely, she must be ashamed of what she just did," I thought to myself. Then I remembered what Mother had said about people who seemed to enjoy hurting others because they were unhappy. My mind went back to the many incidents that had happened in this class.

I wondered if Mr. Thistle taking the larger egg at breakfast that morning might account for Mrs. Thistle's caustic remarks. I was engrossed in thoughts trying to fathom the background of the woman who stood at the head of a class. She had been assigned the privilege and sacred trust of teaching character and education through the medium of a lesson in civics. And here in the same room was a young girl who might never forget this lesson.

I envied this girl, who had just blushed. I was sure that I would have cried. Not until I heard my name did I suddenly realize that while I had been absorbed in my thoughts, the results of the rest of the election were being announced.

Mrs. Thistle had been angry when the Fashion Editor was elected, but now she seemed furious at the class because her words of guidance prior to the balloting had fallen on deaf ears.

"Didn't I tell you that the Editor-in-Chief should be someone who gets good marks in English?" She was berating the class.

"She does," several voices were saying.

"To think," Mrs. Thistle continued, "that right in this class we have people by the name of Clark as in the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Smith as in the name of Captain John Smith, and Sumner, as in the name of that great American statesman, Charles Sumner, and you pick a name that has no connection with the great history of our country! In fact, a name that could have no connection with anything English or American!"

If eyes turned on me, I was not aware of it. I was still visualizing the breakfast table at the Thistle household—the small egg and the large egg, and the large egg that most likely was not eaten by the woman now facing this class. I was most anxious to meet her husband in case that was a clue to her conduct, which was nothing like the other teachers in the school. I was still feeling sorry for the

Fashion Editor when I suddenly realized that I was now the object of this lesson in civics—in the attempt to inculcate civic responsibility in the pupils.

When I was jolted from the reverie, I was pleased with myself that I, too, like the Fashion Editor-elect was not trying to hold back my tears, for there were no tears to hold back. I was looking straight at the teacher who had taken off her glasses and was cleaning them with her handkerchief.

"It's not her glasses that need to be cleaned, but her soul," I was thinking—not an original thought. I had heard Papa say this in one of his sermons when he injected the story of a mistress scolding the maid for not having cleaned house when the mistress discovered it was her glasses that needed cleaning, and not the housemaid who had cleaned properly. I was now analyzing this thought with the sermon that I had understood only partially at the time.

Maybe the teacher took off her glasses in order not to see fully the way so many faces were glaring at her. She was still cleaning her glasses when the bell rang. The class filed out. No mention was ever made again of *The Dean School Gazette*, which had died before it was born.

On the way home, I wondered what Mother would have said had she been home and had I told her of the incident. Now Mother was too ill for me to write to her of such matters. When we go to visit her, I wonder if I should tell her about this, I thought.

We had not gone to see Mother since she left. She was too ill and it was not easy for us to go to Middlebury. Uncle Fred had promised to take us when the weather improved. He now had a Ford, but we didn't see him too often. We were busy all day at school or studying and doing housework at night.

On Sundays Papa felt Tirzah and I should go to church to sing in the choir. We went to the Cilician Church where he preached in Turkish. I was finding it more and more difficult to understand his sermons unless they were in narrative form like the mistress who needed to have her glasses cleaned. I decided even if I did visit Mother, I would not tell her any more about Mrs. Thistle. If she should ask me, I thought, I would just say that everyone was now

used to her insults and paid no attention to them, as was the case. I won't pay any attention to her, I will just dismiss her from my mind entirely, I promised myself.

If Mrs. Thistle was not in my conscious mind, she must have been residing in my subconscious mind. Or maybe what I happened to read that evening projected her into deep recesses of my mind. I had a letter from Mother asking me if I would mail her a few of her favorite books. One of them was the works of Emerson. Because Mother wanted this book, I thought it must be a fine book. I was leafing through it when I saw these words. "The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil." I wonder if Mrs. Thistle ever read Emerson, I thought.

That evening before I said my prayers, I opened the Bible to Psalms. I had my bookmark on Psalm 119. I remembered Mother's saying it was the longest chapter of the Psalms and that it was sectioned according to the Hebrew alphabet. I had been reading one Psalm each evening before I went to bed. The evening of The Dean School Gazette incident I began Psalm 119. I thought I would finish the whole chapter at one reading, but I was beginning to get drowsy and decided to read through "Mem" [of the Hebrew alphabet] and finish the rest the following evening. As soon as I read verse 99, however, my drowsiness left me. How wonderful the Bible is, I thought. There is something for each occasion in life— even for the pupils in Mrs. Thistle's room.

I continued beyond "Mem" and finished Psalm 119 that evening, but I could not forget the ninety-ninth verse. I wondered if Mrs. Thistle ever read the Bible, and if she did, what she would have thought of Psalm 119:99. I did not go to sleep easily or quickly after finishing Psalm 119. And that night I dreamed of the morning exercises in school.

It is a custom or law of the Massachusetts State Department of Education that there be morning exercises before beginning of each school day. Generally teachers read a selection from the Bible and then everyone joins in the Lord's Prayer. Some teachers ask for volunteers to read a selection. I dreamed that I was in Mrs. Thistle's room and was the only one who volunteered to read the Bible that

morning. I went to the front of the class and opened Psalm 119. In the dream, I remembered reading only the 99th verse. I was tempted to change the word "All" in this verse to "one" because I wanted it to apply only to Mrs. Thistle because it did not apply to "all" my teachers. I decided it would be a sacrilege to change the wording, so I read it as it was. There was silence in the room. I had read it dramatically, enunciating every word. The silence in the room was so "audible" that I woke up with a start. It was past my normal awakening hour. I had to quickly because I had to dress Ben Hur as it was my turn to dress him this week before we took him to Mrs. Alden's house. I felt a little disconcerted about my dream. I felt I had used the Bible to avenge Mrs. Thistle. I had removed this verse from its context. I decided to read it again later to find out just what it meant.

In Mrs. Thistle's class that day I enacted in my mind my entire dream. I visualized myself facing the students who were now in this room with me reading that verse that had been written thousands of years ago just for this occasion, it seemed.

I was wondering what would happen if I really had read Psalm 119:99 in her presence. I found it difficult to keep my eyes off Mrs. Thistle. I was trying to anticipate her next move, her next words. I followed her eyes to the pupil who might be her next victim. When she caught my eye, she took off her glasses. I can look her straight in the eye, I thought, suddenly realizing the full meaning of an expression I had heard often without giving its meaning much thought.

I was now beginning to interpret the removal of her glasses each time she did this as an escape. Then my glance fell on her hair which was a very beautiful blonde shade.

I don't remember very much about what she taught us the rest of that year. I walked into her classes each day and walked out when the bell rang. If there was any definite assignment to do, I tried to be ready in case she called on me, but I never volunteered to take part in any class discussion, and I don't ever remember being called upon to recite after the election episode. At recess sometimes I would overhear some of the children say their parents

had gone to the School Board meeting complaining about her. I knew that my parents would never do such a thing, although I felt sure Mother would have visited all my teachers had she been at home and well. I felt very sure that if I had asked Papa to see Mrs. Thistle, especially after the report card incident, he would have done so.

I also felt sure that if Papa had gone to see her, Mrs. Thistle would have been nicer to me because Papa had a way with people, especially women. I had heard someone say once that more women attended church and did church work, and if a minister could not get along with women, he might as well give up his calling. Papa had too many things on his mind and we never bothered him about our schoolwork, except the time he received a notice from the school that group lessons in music would be offered.

I wanted to take violin lessons, but Papa said again that I looked too frail to be able to play the violin, that a violinist has to have strength in the bow arm and strength in the fingers of the left hand. He thought Cynthia would make a better violinist, but Cynthia did not want to take violin lessons. She said the violin was for men and she did not want to do anything masculine. As a result no one took violin lessons.

My insatiable desire to study the violin was one day realized, but it was many years later when I was twenty years old. I bought an inexpensive violin and began to take lessons from a local musician. I was so self-conscious that someone my age should be a total beginner that I was too bashful to even be seen carrying a violin. I took all the back streets to get to the teacher's house, as if everyone I met would know that I was only a beginner, a "scratcher" as my family called me-when I was not being called Paganini or Kreisler. I was teased and mimicked so much while I was practicing that I had to find a room in the house in which I could lock myself. The only room that could be locked was the bathroom. Since we had only one bathroom in the house, I had many interruptions, and my practice sessions were called the "Chamber Music Hour."

Later when I did take violin lessons, I was working every day and

going to school at night, so my lessons had to suffer. Many times I went for a lesson without having practiced at all. For a while I managed to get by because I could do sight reading pretty well, but I had difficulty in memorizing. One day the teacher asked to see the fingers of my left hand. The grooves that should have shown on my fingers were not there. I was not pressing on the strings hard enough. I tried to press harder, but it was not hard enough. My bow arm tired too soon.

I had relative pitch but not perfect pitch. I could not tune my violin unless I was at the piano. I would strike the "A" on the piano to tune my violin before I went upstairs to the bathroom. When the strings got loose (I never could make them tight enough) I would have to go down to find the "A" on the piano again. When I returned to the bathroom, someone was sure to be there, and I would be locked out of my chamber music room. Sometimes I would open the bathroom door and ask Nora bang at the "A" so I could hear it upstairs. This did not always work because we had two pianos and they were not always tuned at the same pitch. Nora would bang the "A" on one piano, and Cynthia on the other. I decided Fate had decreed that I should not be a violinist. After six months and five positions, I gave it up.

Papa was kind enough not to say "I told you so." I never regretted my attempt, however, since I had emerged from this experience with a greater love of violin music and a greater admiration for those musicians who had mastered such a difficult instrument. And the family was glad to again have the bathroom for the purpose it was intended.

The first week in May was Music Week for the entire community. The members of the Music Week Committee had asked the schools to conduct a music memory contest. Several times during the week prior to Music Week, the Music Supervisor would visit each class to play on the phonograph classical music from famous operas and symphonies. She would write the name of the composition and the composer on the board. Then we would have practice sessions and a "contest rehearsal." The teacher would play the composition and we would write down the name on a numbered sheet. We would

not only have to identify the correct name of the composition but also spell the name of the composer correctly. On the practice sessions I never got a hundred, so when the actual contest was being conducted, I had little hope of being a winner. I was not sure if I had spelled Tschaiowsky correctly. The andante movement from his Fifth Symphony, was one of the numbers played. Another was the excerpt, "La Donna e Mobile" from Rigoletto by Verdi. I was not sure whether Rigoletto had two L's and one T, or two T's and one L. Then there was the Sextette from "Lucia Di Lammermoor." I was not sure if Donizetti had one N and two T's or two N's and one T.

Music Week in the town was celebrated by musical programs every evening by the public school orchestra, the parochial school music groups, and community choruses and other music groups. The only auditorium in the town was called "The Old Armory." On the evening of Music Week, it was announced that at the end of that evening, prizes would be given to students who had perfect scores in the Music Memory Contest. When Tirzah's name was called, I was so excited that I did not hear my name. Someone said "They're calling you." I had attended only because we were to sing in a chorus made up of eighth grade pupils. It was a treat for Tirzah and me to take part in any extracurricular activities.

When the man giving out the prizes called my name again, he said, "Apparently she is absent."

Someone said, "No, here she is!"

As I approached the hall, he said, "Come on, little girl, don't be bashful." I was the last one of the prize winners to reach the stage. We were given as prizes The Victrola Book of the Opera. Inscribed in each book were the words, "Presented to ——— for perfect score in Music Memory Contest, The Dean School, Stoneham, Massachusetts, April 30, 1923."

My first thought was how proud Mother would have been had she been present in the hall. Then I thought that when we visit her, I can take this book with me and show it to her. This would be a pleasant thing to talk about. I would not even mention Mrs. Thistle's name. I even felt sorry for Mrs. Thistle now because the children had started a rumor that she was not appointed to teach during the

coming year. Again I thought, "Where do they hear about such things?" I was glad that I had never complained about her to anyone but to Mother and she had said nothing to anybody about it. She had just felt sorry for her and tried to make me understand why some people do things to make others unhappy.

Shortly after Music Week, Uncle Fred promised to drive us in his "Tin Lizzie" Ford to see Mother. He first thought he might make it on Mother's Day. We were terribly disappointed that he had to work that day. We had planned to get dressed up for the occasion and each wear pink carnations for the occasion. We were happy that we had a Mother. Some children we knew wore white carnations each year on Mother's Day. My heart ached for these children and I thanked God that I could wear a pink carnation and prayed that I be able to wear it for many years to come.

[During that period, it was a common tradition that on Mother's Day, children who had a living mother wore a pink carnation, those whose mother had died, a white carnation. BHB]



CHAPTER 33

The Bible as Evidence and an Ominous Turn

Since we could not go to see Mother on Mother's Day, Papa wanted us all to go to church. We all wore pink carnations except Papa. His mother had died from poverty even though when we had left, Papa gave her enough to take care of her for the rest of her life. Later we heard that what we had left had been pillaged, by both Turks and Armenians. From the Turks we had not expected anything, but the Armenians who knew where Papa had buried his possessions and who, we heard, had helped themselves to everything, could have at least given Grandmother a share of the spoils. But to have done this would have been an admission that they had helped themselves to Papa's property. Papa would have forgiven them their temptation if they supplied Grandmother with at least the bare necessities of life.

Some of the local Armenians had come to America as prosperous citizens. Legally there was nothing we could do about this even if Papa could have proved that it was his buried gold that had enriched them. Those who told these tales would hesitate to become witnesses even if they had been asked to do so. Could one bring charges against a misdemeanor that had taken place in another country? Could this be a misdemeanor or was it "finders

keepers?"There was nothing we could do to regain our possessions and it would be too dangerous for Papa to go back to reclaim anything. And his wearing of a white carnation on Mother's Day reminded him and us why it had to be a white one.

It was years and years later that a friend brought Mother's Bible to us.

She said she had found it in the house of an Armenian friend of hers. When our friend saw in the Bible a record of Mother's name and the dates Mother had written each time she completed reading of the New Testament, she had told this friend that surely Mrs. Bagdikian's children should have this book. The woman in whose house was Mother's Bible was discovered had said nothing nor had she raised any objection.

The friend who retrieved and brought this Bible to us did not realize the import of her kind errand. It was invaluable to Mother. But it had also been buried with Papa's gold and other possessions left behind in Marash. The person who found this Bible where Papa had hidden it, therefore also found the gold and other treasures.

It has puzzled us to this day why this person took the trouble of keeping the Bible and bringing it all the way to America. If it had been her intention to give the Bible to us, why did this person not give it to us when she arrived in this country 30 years ago? Thirty years had elapsed before the Bible came into our possession. And it came into our possession because a third person had found it in the woman's home and taken it quietly, without realizing what its discovery would reveal.

The Bible was written in Turkish but in the Armenian alphabet as were so many books that were printed in Turkey. Mother's comments, in her own writing, were in English, and I read them with much interest.

"On September 24, 1901. I finished the New Testament the third time. D.A.U. Marash." [At that date, Daisy Uvezian would have been sixteen years old.]

"September 5, 1902. N.T. finished fourth time. Christ revealed to me more. D.A.U. Marash."

"May 13, 1903. N.T. finished fifth time. The Spirit reacheth the

great things of God. D.A.U. Marash."

"Dec. 31, 1903. N.T. finished sixth time. The Word of God opened to me. D.A.U. Marash."

"Oct. 12, 1904. N.T. finished seventh time. Only the Spirit can guide the soul to understand the Heavenly Book. D.A. Bagdikian, Tarsus." (She had written her last name in full as it was the first time she had completed the New Testament since her marriage.)

"Dec. 12, 1905. N.T. finished eighth time. Perfect rest in Heaven. D.A. B. Marash."

"June 22, 1906. N.T. finished 9th time. Life is the cradle of Eternity. D.A.B. Marash."

"Dec. 26, 1908. N.T. finished tenth time. In quiet is your comfort. D.A.B. Tarsus."

"May 3, 1911. N.T. finished 11th time. Perfect Love leads to Perfect Peace.

He who abides in love, abides in God.

Abide in God and ye shall have Peace.

D.A. B. Tarsus."

"April 12, 1913. N.T. finished 12th time. Grow in grace daily. D.A.B. Tarsus."

"Feb. 15, 1915. N.T. finished 13th time. Farther from the world means nearer to God. D.A.B. Tarsus."

"Sept. 11, 1917. N.T. finished 14th time. Only Jesus is the Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6) Lion of the tribe of Judea who is worthy to take the book and open the seals thereof.) Rev. 5. Even so, come Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22/20) D.A.B. Tarsus."

Since Uncle Fred could not take us to see Mother on Mother's Day, we all went to church, wearing our pink carnations, except Papa. Ben Hur was a little over three years old but we took him, too, and pinned a proud pink carnation on him. It looked lovely with his curly strawberry blond hair. We were always very proud of him when people stopped to look at him. Everyone greeted us with a smile. It was not often that we took Ben Hur to church. If people said, "The poor children," we did not hear it. Whenever I prayed, and I prayed often, regardless of where I was, I remembered the passage in the Bible that said, "And when thou prayest, pray thou in thy

closet." I knew that meant one did not have to shout to the world that one was praying.

I prayed each time I saw a crippled or a blind man on the sidewalk selling pencils. I wanted to stop and buy their wares but I passed by quickly because it hurt me to watch them. I often wondered why these cripples were always men. I never saw crippled or blind women trying to make a living by being stationed on sidewalks and selling pencils. It seemed it was always pencils. I had asked Mother about this once. I had also asked why they were always men. She said probably because they were wounded soldiers, a fate women had escaped. I had seen many beggars in other countries but was surprised to see any in America. I had said this to Mother. She said if they were selling anything, it could not be called begging. Once I had put a coin in a cup and had run before the man could give me anything. When Mother said it could not be called begging if they sold anything, I was sorry I had done this. I had never thought of it in that light.

"Why can't the government or the Salvation Army take care of them?" I had asked, very much concerned. I had great faith in the American Government and in the Salvation Army. I had heard nothing but praise of these two agencies and always thought of them simultaneously. Mother had answered my question by saying it was a virtue for people to try to help themselves, that type of pride often helped people to maintain their self-respect. Every time I passed such people on the street, I prayed to God not only to help them but also thanked Him for my blessings, for being more fortunate than they. I was praying now in church with my eyes sometimes open, sometimes closed. I prayed most often with my eyes opened so I would not "flaunt" my prayers. I was now praying silently that by next year on Mother's Day, Mother would be with us. Each tomorrow was a mystery and the joys that the morrow might bring helped endure the todays that were sad.

Ben Hur was sitting between Tirzah and me and when he jumped suddenly, my thoughts which had been so far away were brought back to the present. Ben Hur had jumped with joy when he saw Papa walk to the pulpit. Papa smiled often, but I knew this was

a special smile for his children facing him. His thoughts, too, must have been projected to a future when his children would be sitting next to his dear wife.

I had to follow each word carefully in order to understand his sermon. Today I seemed to understand it better than usual. Maybe it was because he was telling a simple story. It was Mother's Day, but his sermon was directed, he said, not alone to mothers alone but also to mothers and fathers alike.

In his sermon, he said he liked to think of this as Parents' Day and would like to depart from tradition, because he firmly believed that in the Christian upbringing of children, mothers and fathers should share the responsibility. They should work jointly and set exemplary lives. A child should learn to know that what one parent said or decided would be backed by the other. A child should not, as so often he had seen, go to the father when he is not satisfied by the decisions or directions of the mother, or vice versa. A woman who does not respect her husband cannot expect her children to respect him. Filial respect or love has to be earned, not forced.

But the part of his sermon that I understood best and liked best was the story about a man whose parents had sold him because of economic necessity. This man had married a haughty woman who felt herself socially above her husband's parents. She had persuaded her husband, therefore, to relegate his parents to quarters in the attic. They were not invited to join the family at meals. Her husband would take all the meals upstairs to the attic to his parents. One day their little boy said, "Papa, please let me carry the tray to grandpa and grandma." "No," he replied, "you don't know how. That's my job." But, replied the boy, "I want to learn. I should practice doing it because when I am married and you and mother come to live with me, I will have to take the tray up to you in my attic."

Early in June, there was a letter from Mother. I had mailed a letter to her just to her to tell her I had understood Papa's sermon on Mother's Day. I had also told her the eighth grade graduation exercises would be held soon. I told her we had to choose the course we were to take in high school, and I wished so much she could be home to advise us, but that Uncle Fred would soon drive

us to see her.

I knew she could not have received my letter yet. Her letter was addressed to Papa, but we always gathered around him when there was a letter from Mother. Papa opened it hastily and we all looked over his shoulders. My heart sank when I did not see those four letters that had been their secret salutation. She had said, some day she would let us know what those letters stood for. But here was this letter in which she spelled out those initials.

"My Most Precious Aram," the letter began. "Your Most Devoted Daisy," it ended.

Why now, I wondered, did she let us know? But I was afraid to give myself the answer.

We all wanted to go with Papa to see Mother, but he said since the next day was Sunday maybe Uncle Fred could drive us. Today he would go alone because he could not go on Sundays. Tirzah and I were awake when Uncle Fred came home that Saturday night. We told him Mother was not feeling well and that Papa had been away all day visiting her.

Uncle Fred promised to drive us to see her. He said we would leave very early Sunday morning. Tirzah and I stayed up late getting everyone's clothes ready and we prepared a picnic lunch. Papa came home before we were ready for bed. He looked tired and said although Mother was not feeling well, it would be all right for us all to visit her the next day. I arose very early Sunday morning and I was ready first.

I helped take all the bundles to Uncle Fred's car and sat in the front seat with him. To pass the time, he tried to show me how to drive. He explained about the clutch and the brake and about putting it in low gear, get into second gear, and high gear.

While we were waiting for the others, he asked me to get into the driver's seat and try it. Before I knew it, the car was moving. I screamed, "It's moving! It's moving!"

Uncle Fred calmly pulled the emergency brake and laughed. "Of course it's moving. It's supposed to."

My screams brought the others out. But soon we bid Papa goodbye and were off to Lakeville State Sanatorium. It was a very

hot Sunday. On the way we had a blowout. The car swerved, but Uncle Fred deftly brought it to a stop. We got out of the car while he jacked it up. In the sweltering sun we watched him patch a tube. It looked like an intestine to me. He put the tube back in the tire, the tire back on the wheel, and off we started again.

About half an hour later, there was another blowout. Uncle Fred suggested that while he fixed the same tire again, we find a shady spot and start to have our picnic lunch. I watched him take out the "intestine" and patch it up again. I knew I could never drive a car if I had to do all that whenever there was a blowout.

Uncle Fred finally joined us under a shady tree and we completed our lunch. No occasion seemed gloomy if Uncle Fred was present. He could tell funny stories in every dialect. When he told an Irish joke, one could swear he was Irish. When he told a French, Italian, or Jewish joke, he was a perfect mimic. We had some favorites we would ask him to repeat again and again.

As soon as we were in sight of the sanatorium, we put a clean romper on Ben Hur, we combed our hair, and tried to look as nice as we could for Mother. She was alone in a room because she was very ill. She smiled when she saw us and tried to sit up. It just did not seem right to say only a "Hello" to one's Mother, so I kissed her on the forehead as she had told us we could. All the others did the same, including Uncle Fred.

Mother hugged Ben Hur and tears welled up in her eyes. She tried to be cheerful and began to ask questions. We all chattered away, each one waiting for her turn to say something. There were so many things I wanted to talk about and to ask about, but we had promised one another that we would not discuss anything unpleasant. I had promised myself that I would not talk about Mrs. Thistle. The election of office incident in which I was involved seemed so long ago, and nothing of any consequence had happened since.

When Mother asked about school, I told her the date of the eighth grade graduation. She said she was sorry she would not be able to be with us, but she would be thinking of us and praying for us. She finally asked me how Mrs. Thistle was.

"All right," I said. "Nothing special has happened lately." Then I added that some of the children said she was fired, that she would not be coming back to teach next year. Mother said she was sorry to hear about this, but felt some day when she is happier, she might be a good teacher. I again visualized the breakfast table at the Thistle household and thought maybe if she could get two eggs of the same size, there would be no trouble.

Nora told Mother about the blowout and imitated the noise it made. We all laughed at this. Mother asked Uncle Fred about his work. He said he enjoyed being a lecturer on sightseeing tours. We teased him to tell Mother about some of the incidents he had told us. He repeated the one about the dignified woman who seemed upset because someone on the bus was smoking.

"Young man," she had said to Uncle Fred, "do you allow smoking on this bus?"

"Yes, Madam," Uncle Fred had replied, "go right ahead."

We had asked him what she had said next, if she had been angry. He said she had threatened to report him. He had then given her one of his business cards.

"Here is my card. Madam, it may help you identify me."

"Tell Mother what happened later," we teased, and Mother seemed very much interested. Uncle Fred seemed a little modest about telling the rest, so we tried to tell it. We had learned a trick that we always pulled on him when he hesitated to tell some of his stories. We would start to tell it, and purposely we would tell it wrong. He would then, naturally, correct us and finish it. He was obliged to finish the story after we had started it, and

Mother seemed amused to hear the rest of it.

During a stretch from one historical point to another when he did not have any lecturing or explanations to make, Uncle Fred had a habit of singing or whistling. He had a beautiful baritone voice. We so often said someday he would be a famous singer and that we would have a radio in every room in the house, tuned to the station from which he would sing everyday. On this particular occasion, after he was reprimanded by the lady who complained about smoking on the bus, he had sung excerpts from operas—"Celeste

Aida," "Vesti la guibba," "The Toreador Song," and many others.

After the bus had stopped at Lexington and Concord and Uncle Fred was returning to the bus with the sightseers, this woman had edged her way toward him and complimented him not only on his lectures but also about his beautiful voice and his knowledge of opera. She had then given him her name and said she was a teacher and very seldom found a sightseeing tour lecturer who could state facts so accurately and so interestingly. This lady had later taken other sightseeing tours with Uncle Fred and kept his business card, only to remember his name and address. The bus company never received her complaint.

Mother was delighted with this story and we urged Uncle Fred to tell more. We told Mother we wished we lived near the hospital so we could come to see her often. She said she had so many things to tell us and that she would write to us again when she became a little stronger. I thought of her last letter and the salutation and the close, which had portended an ill omen.

"I will write every day, Mother," I said, "but you don't have to answer it. We will come often to visit you now that school will close soon."

Mother could not sit up very long at a time and would rest back or lie down during our visit. At one point when we were all laughing about something Uncle Fred told or something cute Ben Hur said (he was talking quite well by now) Mother began to laugh which made her cough. She had a hard time stopping her cough, so the nurse came in and said maybe it was time for us to go.

Uncle Fred told the nurse she was right and added a pleasantry. The young nurse eyed him (for he was a handsome young man in his early twenties, although he seemed much older to us then) and asked what relation he was to us. Mother had stopped coughing by now and introduced us all to her. She said what a cute little boy Ben Hur was, which pleased us all. Uncle Fred then added that we get ready to go because he didn't know what Hester would be up to. He had called his Tin Lizzie "Hester" because, he said, "She Hester be coaxed to go."

Mother laughed at this as we were leaving which made our

parting a little easier. Mother's room was on the first floor so we were not very far from the exit when Mother's nurse saw us and came to talk to us, especially Uncle Fred. Ben Hur was in Uncle Fred's arms.

Tirzah started to ask the nurse some questions about Mother's condition. I took advantage of this by sneaking back to Mother's room, saying "Oh, I forgot something," but I don't think anyone even heard me. When I reached Mother's door (I was just going to ask her if she needed anything we could send with Papa), I saw her lying down with her eyes closed. The closed eyes had already shed the tears that were flowing down her cheeks.

I did not wait until she opened her eyes, so I quickly returned. No one had noticed me until I was walking toward them.

"Where have you been?" Tirzah asked.

"I was looking for the ladies' room," I said. The nurse showed us where it was and we all went in, except Uncle Fred. Tirzah took Ben Hur with us and we all washed up in readiness for our return trip. I did not tell anyone where I had been or what I had seen, but Nora spotted my red eyes and said "What's the matter?"

"Oh, I always cry when we say goodbye to Mother," I said.

All the way home Uncle Fred tried to keep us amused. We knew he was as sad as we were. After all, Mother was his only sister and he loved her dearly, and he knew how sick she was. Every time a car passed us, he would tell us about its make, about any special features it had. I was most interested in the Franklin and wanted to know why it would not freeze in winter like the other cars.

"Because it has no water to freeze," Uncle Fred replied.

"Why don't all the cars have the same feature then?" I asked and Uncle Fred tried to explain.

"You're always asking questions," Cynthia said.

"Well, that's the way to learn. Mother said so," I replied.

Then we heard a blowout.

"Not again!" Tirzah said.

The car did not seem to swerve, but we saw the oncoming car that was the one with the blowout. It was coming straight toward us. Uncle Fred made a sharp turn and stopped our car a few inches

away from the other car. The driver of the other car got out and walked toward our car.

"Close shave," he said to Uncle Fred. "You handled your car like a veteran."

"What is a veteran?" Nora asked.

"I'm not the only one who asks questions," I said, turning to Cynthia.

"Didn't I see you all at the hospital?" the man asked.

"Yes," Uncle Fred answered. "My sister, the children's Mother, is there."

"Too bad," the young man replied. "My fiancée is there too. She is coming along fine. I hope your sister is, too."

Uncle Fred didn't say anything but I was sure he had shaken his head. When the man said, "Too bad," then I knew I was not mistaken.

Uncle Fred helped him fix his flat tire. The man didn't even have a jack in his car, so Uncle Fred took his. Uncle Fred seemed to be doing all the work, although the man was trying to help.

"You seem to know a lot about cars," he said to Uncle Fred.

"It's my business," Uncle Fred said. Uncle Fred was a mechanic as well as a bus driver and a sightseeing tour lecturer.

When we left the man and started for home again, Uncle Fred advised us that if ever we drove a car, we should always make sure of two things in addition to having gas in the car and spare tires—having a jack and a flashlight. "That man did not have a jack, and I bet he didn't have a flashlight in his car," Uncle Fred said.



CHAPTER 34

*A Shocking
Phone Call*

Soon after we arrived home from the sanatorium, Father brought home a guest who was to stay with us for a few weeks. He was a former pupil of Uncle James and Uncle James had said he was one of his most promising violin students. I had noticed that when he came home he had a violin case in addition to his suitcase. I was very glad about this because I knew that if we asked him to play, he would. He remembered us all from Marash but except for Tirzah we didn't remember him. He didn't know Uncle Fred but said he had heard about him. When he found out we had just returned from visiting Mother, he asked how she was.

"I must visit her too," the man said, "and tell her about her brother in Beirut, from where I have just come."

"He's my brother too," Uncle Fred said.

"Of course," the man replied, "and a very fine violinist and teacher."

"I was only nine years old when I last saw him," Uncle Fred said.

Ben Hur had fallen asleep on the way home, but he was now wide awake. Our guest, Mr. Kimdirian, admired him and said he had never seen this child before because he had been born during the massacre and left when he was nine days old.

"I hope they won't start talking about that," I thought, and left the room to help Tirzah in the kitchen. After we ate our supper, I summoned up enough courage to ask our guest if he would play

the violin for us. He was very gracious and said, "Certainly, anything you like."

"She's crazy about the violin," Nora said.

Mr. Kimdirian seemed surprised. "Crazy?" he asked, apparently thinking of the literal meaning of the word. Uncle Fred explained the connotation of the word, saying it is a slang word meaning "very fond" or "enthusiastic" about something. Mr. Kimdirian was a well educated man, a college graduate, and spoke perfect English, but he admitted he would have to learn to speak "American" as well.

"The use of slang," Papa said, "is very interesting in this country. Used correctly, it enriches the language and adds color to it."

He went on to explain in an erudite manner the proper use of slang. Papa used it sometimes, or rather, tried to use it, and it always sounded so funny coming from him. It just did not seem natural. I was afraid Papa's dissertation on slang would delay Mr. Kimdirian from playing the violin.

A telephone call for Nora interrupted this dissertation on American slang. As soon as Nora hung up, she ran to Papa and said, "They want me to deliver papers!"

"Who is 'they'?" Papa asked.

"One of my classmates sells *The Stoneham Press* every week. She wants me to help her."

"How much will they pay you?" Papa asked.

"I don't know, but I want to do it," Nora replied.

"Well, if it is all right for one of your classmates to sell papers, I guess it will be all right for you," Papa said.

I now had my chance to remind Mr. Kimdirian about the violin selections.

"Will you please play the "Meditation" from *Thais*?" I asked.

"Surely," he replied, and we all left the table to go to the living room. He tuned his violin without any help from the piano. How impressed I was with this.

"Can anyone accompany me?" he asked. No one volunteered because none of us could play that well.

"I think Lydia can," Papa suggested.

"I can't," I said.

"Go on," Tirzah and Cynthia and Nora coaxed.

"When I try to accompany anyone, I make mistakes and everyone pokes me," I said, "so now I am not even going to try. I really can't, honest," I said to Mr. Kimdirian, and I could have proved it easily.

When Mr. Kimdirian finished playing the "Meditation," and the applause died down, he said to me, "Didn't you like it?"

"Oh, it takes her an hour to get over it. When she wakes up, she'll clap," Tirzah said.

I was embarrassed that I had not thought to applaud with the others, but I was not able to express myself well enough to tell him that my silence meant a deeper appreciation than any clapping could do.

"I loved that," I said, "and now will you play the "Intermezzo" from *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni?"

"I guess you must like violin music if you can remember those numbers," he said.

"Uncle James used to play them," I said, and he began to play. I could not concentrate on this so well, even though it was being played beautifully. I was on my guard—I had to be ready to clap as loudly as I could as soon as he finished it. Apparently there was no other way of showing one's pleasure. It occurred to me at this moment that maybe that's why I enjoyed listening to the records on the Victrola. I didn't have to applaud when it was finished, although it was disconcerting to get up and change the record or stop it.

We did not yet have a radio. Only one person in our immediate neighborhood had one. I thought how nice it would be to have a radio, if beautiful music like this could be heard.

I don't think I was the first to start applauding when Mr. Kimdirian finished, but I am sure he must have noticed how violently I was applauding this time. I could have named many other favorites for him to play, but I was afraid he would think I was selfish so he played some other request numbers that I didn't like as well as the ones I could have named. Nora asked for a march which to me did not seem right to be played on a violin but he played it with a great deal of pep and it did sound gay.

Papa wanted something by Paganini.

"By the way, what happened to Paganini?" Mr. Kimdirian asked.

"The musician or our horse?" Tirzah asked, and we all laughed.

Mr. Kimdirian had heard about the Paganini in our family, as well as Mozart, Beethoven, and the other horses we had in the past. "I always wanted to know," Mr. Kimdirian said, "why all the horses you had in your family were named after famous composers."

"My wife can best answer that," Papa said, and a sadness seemed to pervade the room when Mother's name was mentioned.

"I would like to visit her," Mr. Kimdirian said.

"I am sure she would like to see you," Papa said. "She will want to hear the latest news about her brother in Beirut."

Papa and Mr. Kimdirian began to reminisce, and I was afraid that sooner or later they would start to talk about the "Marash incident," which was always too painful for me. I went to the kitchen to start the dishes.

I kept Mother informed about our graduation plans. I knew she was too ill to write, but I knew that hearing from home regularly would make her happy. Mrs. Deah came to visit us on the day of graduation. She said she knew we would not have Mother there and she thought we might like to have someone to take her place. Graduation was during the day, so there were not many fathers present. Papa came with Mrs. Deah.

It was a very simple affair, held in a large classroom. That's why we were not allowed to bring more than two guests. Cynthia and Nora were home with Ben Hur. My mind was far off in Middleboro and I don't even remember who the speaker was. I think I sang in the chorus which consisted of all the "graduating" class. I do remember that the song we sang was "Whispering Hope." I remember because I was thinking of the words more than the music.

Soft as the voice of an angel,
Breathing a lesson unheard,
Hope, with a gentle persuasion,
Whispering her comforting word.

A lump came to my throat. I felt I needed a comforting word. I watched the other children. Their mothers were there.

Wait, till the darkness is over,
Wait, till the tempest is done,
Hope for the sunshine tomorrow,
After the shower is gone.

I had stopped singing. I was just listening to the words, every word. How did it apply to me, to us, to Mother's being away in the hospital, maybe dying.

If in the dusk of the twilight,
Dim be the region afar,
Will not the deepening darkness
Brighten the glimmering star?

Then, when the night is upon us,
Why should the heart sink away?
When the dark midnight is over,
Watch for the breaking of day.

Whispering Hope, oh, how welcome thy voice,
Is making my heart in its sorrow rejoice.
Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice.

I tried to understand this last line—"Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice." How could one rejoice in sorrow? Whispering Hope. Why did Hope have to be whispered? Did it mean a faint Hope? I felt confused.

There was a diploma in my hands, with gold and maroon ribbons. We had voted these colors.

My name must have been called. I must have gone to the front of the room and received it. Everyone was milling around the room, Mothers hugging their children, their graduates. Graduation was over.

It was pleasant to have Mr. Kimdirian as a guest in our house. He kept us amused and was very generous in playing for us whenever he had a chance. On Sundays he played the violin in church. One day he went to visit Mother with Papa. When he and Papa came home, they both looked very sad. I did not ask the question I wanted to. I went to my room to pray, to ask God to send a message of hope, even if it had to be a whispering hope.

It was the Fourth of July. We had hoped Uncle Fred could drive us again to see Mother but a holiday like the Fourth of July was one of the busiest days in his work. He had to drive the bus to New York. Papa went to see Mother and Mr. Kimdirian stayed home with us. Outside children were playing with firecrackers. Tirzah was in the kitchen preparing supper. I was in the "Sitting Room" doing some ironing. The telephone bell rang. It was Mrs. Deah.

"Who is this?" she asked.

"Lydia," I replied.

"Leedia, deah," she said, "I am so, so sorry to hear of your mother's death."

I began to sob. Tirzah called from the kitchen.

"Who was that call for?"

I could not speak.

Mr. Kimdirian was in the next room and heard my sobs.

"What is it?" he asked.

I could not reply. I handed him the phone.

Mrs. Deah was calling, "Hello? Hello?"

Mr. Kimdirian identified himself and said "Lydia seems upset. May I help you?"

Apparently Mrs. Deah repeated the news to him.

"Are you sure?" he kept saying. "Who told you? I think there must be a mistake. Please don't repeat it until we call you back. Mr. Bagdikian would have called me if the news is correct."

By now, Tirzah was in the room. She saw me sobbing.

"What is it? What is it?" she asked alarmed.

I tried to tell her. Then she began to cry. To see Tirzah cry was all I needed. The tears now began to come from my heart.

Mr. Kimdirian hung up and said, "I think it is a mistake. She did

not seem to have a reliable report. Don't tell the other children till we are sure."

"I am going to call the hospital," I said, but I was crying too profusely to speak coherently.

Mr. Kimdirian telephoned the hospital. He asked for Papa. They said he had just left. He asked how Mother was. They asked him to hold the line. I interpreted this as bad news and began to sob again. He shook his head and said, "Wait."

When he began to talk again, Tirzah and I waited motionless, silently.

"Are you her nurse?" he was asking. "How long ago did you see her? Just now? Thank you. This is a friend," he said and hung up, smiling. "I thought it was a mistake," he said smiling. "Don't tell the other children. No need to upset them.

"Let's not tell Papa either," Tirzah said.

We never knew when Papa would be home, so when supper was ready we sat down to eat. My eyes were still red.

"Have you been crying?" Nora asked.

"She burned her fingers while she was ironing," Mr. Kimdirian said.

When I resumed my ironing after the false alarm, I really burned my finger. I had immediately applied vinegar, the family stand-by for burns. I had not even cried about it, but how grateful I was to Mr. Kimdirian for thinking up this excuse.

I could not sleep until I heard Papa come in. I ran down to ask him how Mother was.

"She is still very ill," he said. "Just keep praying."

I had been praying since I went to bed. I had read Mark 11 again and was trying to gather faith that would move a mountain. Mother's life depended on it, I thought.

"When did you see Mother last?" I said. It was after we had received the telephone call.

"Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing," I replied. "Mrs. Deah called and asked about Mother," I replied, knowing God would forgive me for this equivocation.

"She is very kind," Papa remarked, and for the first time since her telephone call, I felt a spirit of forgiveness toward her.

"When can we go to see Mother?" I asked Papa. "Tomorrow?"

"I am afraid not," he said. "She gets tired too easily now. Maybe Uncle Fred can drive you next Sunday."

I tiptoed back to my room, since I did not want to wake anyone.



CHAPTER 35

The Call

Papa and Mr. Kimdirian left right after an early breakfast. Mr. Kimdirian had been invited to spend the day at the home of friends, and Papa was going to spend the day with Mother.

Some children were still playing with their leftover fire crackers. Ben Hur was in his sandbox near the catalpa tree. Cynthia and Nora were taking turns keeping an eye on Ben Hur on a swing that had been fixed onto the catalpa tree. Tirzah, as usual, was in the kitchen baking.

I had just finished making all the beds and I was about to sneak out to watch the activities outdoors. I thought how wonderful it would be to lie down in a hammock under the beautiful catalpa tree and read. Just as I reached the front porch, the telephone bell rang. Since yesterday's telephone call from Mrs. Deah, I was startled. Tirzah got there before I did.

"Papa, Papa, I can't hear you very well," she was saying.

I stood in the doorway listening, praying, "Oh God, let it not be bad news about Mother."

When Tirzah began to cry, I knew it must be bad news.

"But there isn't enough money in the house for all our train fares," I heard Tirzah say. Then, I heard her say, "Oh, all right, I'll tell Lydia to run up there right away and get it."

I waited till she hung up.

"Mother is very ill. She wants to see all of us before ... before it is too late. Papa wants us to go to South Station right away and take the first train we can for Middleboro. You go to Mr. Adzigian and tell him what we have to do. Tell him we were all unexpectedly called

away and tell him that Papa said he was sure he would loan us ten dollars. Hurry!"

I dashed out of the house crying. Nora saw me and shouted, "What's the matter?"

"Bad news," I said, crying. "Go in the house right away and get ready."

I ran all the way to Mr. Adzigian's house and explained my errand as coherently as I could through my tears. I ran all the way back. It was probably a mile each way. When I came back everyone was almost ready. I just took off my pinafore and put on my Sunday dress and we went off down the street. Nora ran ahead to catch the car that was leaving and ask the conductor to wait for us. We would have had half an hour's wait had we missed it. We were all sobbing quietly. He must have been puzzled.

Ben Hur was the only one who spoke all the way to Boston. He enjoyed the car ride, especially when we reached Spot Pond and the car swayed in making the turn. As soon as we arrived at South Station, Tirzah gave me the money and said, "Go get the tickets." I didn't know just where to go but I found a window that said "Tickets."

I asked the man about tickets to Middleboro.

"How many?" he asked. I told all our ages. By now the others had caught up with me and were behind me. There was no charge for Ben Hur and it was only half fare for Nora.

Even Nora did not say anything funny all the way to Middleboro. I prayed all the way. I asked God if I had done something wrong so that he had not heard my prayers. I wondered if I had lacked faith to cast mountains into the sea. Maybe I really had doubts in my heart. Maybe I had not forgiven "ought against any." I really prayed hard, telling God I did not have "ought" even against Mrs. Thistle. In fact, I had really been sorry when I heard some parents had complained so much about Mrs. Thistle that she was "fired" for next year. I was glad I had made no trouble for her.

I had just told Mother about her and Mother made no trouble. She just told me to feel sorry for unhappy people. She told me the longer I lived, the more I would find people like Mrs. Thistle and

that maybe this was part of my eighth grade education, to learn what happens when people are unhappy, to learn a lesson so I would be careful when I was unhappy not to make others unhappy.

I was riding in the train now, feeling very unhappy, but I was glad I had not made anyone unhappy, except maybe the day I answered Mrs. Thistle back. Mother reassured me then that God would forgive me that slip up if I promised not to be disrespectful to any of my teachers or elders.

Not even on the day she would not let me be the Editor-in-Chief of The Dean School Gazette did I say anything against Mrs. Thistle. Some of the pupils said "What a meany she is," as we were filing out of the room. All I had said was, "I don't care. I have too much house work to do to stay after school for extra work anyhow." I knew God must believe this because it was the truth. I could honestly say that I did not have "ought" even against the Turks. Not even against "those five men." I did not even know who they were. Mother had said Satan was within them and said how much worse it would be if Satan was within us and we were doing the things they did to us.

Although she had cried when they made trouble for her when she first went to Rutland by telling government officials Papa was a rich man and should be deported if he did not pay for his wife's hospitalization in a public State institution. I heard her tell Papa "I keep praying to God and saying 'Forgive them for they know not what they do,' but it still hurts. Papa had held her hands and said he would go to the Governor, to the President of the United States if necessary. He had gone to the Governor and the Governor had helped him. It was not necessary to go to the President of the United States, but I am sure he would have gone if it had been.

"The Turks were not enough-but our own people," Mother had sobbed when her courage began to wane. Then Papa had reminded her about the assassination of Abraham Lincoln "by his own people."

When the train stopped I was still praying, trying to convince God that I really did not have "ought" against anyone in the world and hoped He would believe me and restore enough faith to make Mother well.

We took a bus from the station to the sanatorium. A nurse

pointed to Mother's room. The door was open when we tiptoed in. Papa was holding her hand and they were both praying. We began to cry. They opened their eyes when they heard our sobs. Mother held out her arms as Papa went out and brought enough chairs for all of us.

"Mother, you must try to get well," Tirzah said.

"Something happened last night," Mother began, "and I want to tell you all about it."

"Last night, at about eleven o'clock I knew definitely that I was dying. I saw the gray clouds break away and a bright ray broke through. I could see my dear Father and my brothers beckoning me to heaven. 'I am ready,' I said, for I was tired and very ill. Then I thought of you all, my dear children and husband. I asked God to give me twenty-four more hours to live. I wanted to see you all once more."

Then we began to weep again. Mother began to cry also, but she stopped and continued.

"I could see the doors of heaven slowly close as if to say, 'We will wait for you until you see your dear ones more.' So you see, God did answer my prayers and I can now say goodbye to you all, because by eleven o'clock tonight, I shall be on my way-going home-my final home."

"Why do you say that?" Tirzah asked, and I envied her that she could speak.

"It was about eleven o'clock last night that I asked God for one more day. My day will be up tonight."

We all began to weep again.

"Save your tears," Mother said. "You have many years left yet to face. There will be other days when you will weep. It takes greater courage to face life than to face death. I am not afraid to go, but I am sorry to leave you behind. Your father will have to be, as he already has these past three years, both father and mother to you. Be good to him. He will need you. When you are faced with great decisions in life, and you need guidance, pray for it. I will be with you in spirit, and heaven will seem nearer."

What else can a dying Mother tell her children? What can

children say to their dying Mother?

"Tirzah, you are the oldest," Mother continued. "You will have to take my place. Lydia will be a good assistant. Cynthia and Nora, you are fortunate to have older sisters who will help you. Maybe Tirzah and Lydia are more fortunate than you in some respects. They had a mother a few years longer than you did. And Ben Hur, my dear, unfortunate son, I had you only for a few days."

She began to weep and held out her arms for him. Ben was in Papa's lap. Papa put him in her arm.

"God sent you to me only a few years before it was time for Him to call me. In years to come, you may not remember me, but I will try to guide you from afar."

"How fortunate Ben Hur is," I thought, "because he is too young to understand and remember this hour."

Then I felt guilty when I remembered what Mother had just said. I had Mother for many years more than he had. I would be able to remember her. I would never forget. And the letters that I loved to write to her, I would write no more.

Then I burst out crying.

"Mother, if you go now, I will wish I had frozen to death on the way from Marash!"

It was out. I had been thinking about this for so long. "I wish I had frozen to death instead of just having had frozen toes," I wept.

"Aren't you thankful that you lived?"

"Not if you die," I cried again.

"Do you know how sad I and the rest of the family would have been if you had died? Would you have wanted to bring such sadness to us?"

"No," I said, "I didn't think of it that way," and I wept again.

"Don't offend God again, Lydia, by thinking such thoughts. Have you ever stopped to think how terrible it would be if God had left it up to us when to die? God knows when to call us to Him, and it is not for us to decide. Aren't you happy that I did not die when Ben Hur was born? You remember when the bullet missed me by just an inch? Wasn't God good to bring us all from Marash safely? Other families were not as fortunate as we were. Their families will have

no graves for them. Although I do not want a tombstone—and your father knows about that—there will be a spot somewhere near you which you can call the station from which point I left to go Home. Just a marker and a pine tree is all I want for my station.

“I have told your father that some of the ladies of the church may tell him that Tirzah and Lydia are old enough to wear mourning clothes. He has promised to tell them that it was my wish that this not be done. Outer garments are not always symbols of grief within. I have also told your father that I want you to remember me as you see me now, talking to you, spending my last moments with you. My body is not to be taken home to Stoneham. It will rest in a funeral home. Please don’t ask to visit me there. There may be other visitors there, but only my own dear ones are my visitors now.”

“Mother! Mother!” we all cried.

“Will you do one last thing for me?” she asked. “Will you join me in the hymn ‘Some Day the Silver Cord Will Break?’”

How could we say no, even if our hearts were breaking just before “the breaking of the silver cord?” I don’t know whether we sang it or wept it, but we all joined Mother, who had a very beautiful voice.

Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But, Oh, the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of the King?

Some day my earthly house will fall.
I cannot tell how soon ‘twill be.
But this I know—my All in All
Has now a place in Heav’n for me.

Some day, when fades the golden sun
Beneath the rosy tinted west,
My blessed Lord will say, “Well done!”
And I shall enter into rest.

Some day till then I'll watch and wait,
My lamp all trimmed and burning bright,
That when my Savior opens the gate,
My soul to Him may take its flight.

And I shall see him face-to-face
And tell the story—Saved by grace.

"I've asked your Father to have this played at the service. I would also like to have the hymn set to Tennyson's 'Crossing the Bar.' And maybe Mr. Kimdirian can play excerpts from Dvorak's 'New World Symphony.'

"We should be thankful that we are now in this 'New World.' God sent us all safely here. And now I am going home again to another new world. There, some day, till then, I'll watch and wait for you."

It was late afternoon. Papa had a timetable and had planned what train we would take back.

"Can't we stay longer?" Tirzah asked.

"I wish you could, dear," Mother said, "but the children are tired. Ben Hur is falling asleep. He hasn't had his afternoon nap. Your Father will stay a little longer with me."

"I am staying here all night," Papa said.

"But the telephone call that came this morning for you," Mother said, "Don't forget that."

"I can't leave you now," Papa said. "Another minister can go to see her."

A childhood friend of Mother's was dying and she had asked for Papa. We had received the telephone call just before we left the house. We had told them where Papa was.

"You must go, Aram," Mother said. "She was my dear friend when we were young girls."

"But you need me more than she does. Her family is with her. I want to be with you."

"You must promise to go, Aram," Mother implored.

"I cannot," Papa pleaded.

"Please" Aram," Mother said, "grant a dying wish. I will pray to have God send you back before eleven tonight."

Papa promised, but said he wanted to be with her for a while after we left.

"Let's not all leave at once," he said, and Mother gave in to this request.

How does one say the final goodbye? I don't know, but we did.



CHAPTER 36

The Silver Cord

As we left the hospital building, someone said, "Oh, hello?"

It was the young man Uncle Fred had helped when he had a blowout and almost hit our car. When he came closer to us, he saw us all weeping.

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" he said.

"My mother is going to die tonight," Cynthia cried.

"We hope not," Tirzah added, drying her tears.

"Of course not," the young man comforted us. "Are you going to the station? I'll give you a lift."

The bus to the railroad station was waiting, but we followed the young man to where his car was parked. "Where do you live?" he asked us. When we said "Stoneham," he said he wished he could take us home but that he had promised to do a special errand for his fiancée who would be coming home in two weeks.

"I am so happy about it," he said, "that to celebrate I would like to drive you all the way home if I didn't have a promise to keep."

"Oh, that's all right," Tirzah said. "It will be a great help to have you drive us to the railroad station."

"My mother came home once," Nora blurted.

I had almost said the same thing but God had held my tongue just in time. I thought it would mean that his fiancée could go home now but would get sick again and die, as Mother was going to. I tried to shake away the morbid thought and I was glad there was something in the Bible about times like this. It was one of the first Bible verses Mother had taught us to memorize: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy

Sight, Oh Lord, my Redeemer and my Strength."

"Always repeat this verse when you are not sure what to say," I remember Mother saying, "By the time you finish saying it, the right answer might come to you. If the right answer does not come, maybe it will be best to say nothing."

As we walked to his car, I thought of this, and then I thought, "Who will tell us such things after she is gone? Who will answer all our questions?" and then I began to weep again.

It was good to have someone already there when we arrived home. It was late in the evening and we were all glad that Mr. Kimdirian was already there. We were hungry and tired. I thought when we left Mother that I could never be hungry again. We tried to feed Ben Hur in order to give him supper before putting him to bed, but we could not wake him up. Mr. Kimdirian picked him up from the couch where Tirzah had laid him as soon as we got in the house.

"He may need his sleep more than his food," he philosophized and took him upstairs.

The baking Tirzah had been doing when we left hurriedly in the morning was still on the stove. The ironing board and the clothes I had been pressing were still in the room as I had left them.

"What a sight this house is," I said.

"Never mind," Mr. Kimdirian said, "You had better have a bite and then all go to bed. You must be tired."

"If you will eat with us, it will help," Tirzah said.

He said he had already eaten his supper where he was visiting but was hungry again. He said he had come home earlier than his host and hostess had wanted him to, but he told them he wanted to be with us. He said he was surprised not to find us at home but thought someone must have given us a ride to Middleboro at Sullivan Square.

"I got here about half an hour before you did," he said.

"We just missed that car," Cynthia said.

"Too bad," he said, "I could have helped you carry Ben Hur. He is getting too big to carry."

"He walked," Nora said, "but fell asleep as soon as Tirzah put him on the couch."

As soon as Cynthia and Nora went upstairs to wash up, Tirzah told Mr. Kimdirian how and why we had left unexpectedly. When her voice began to shake, I could hold back my tears no longer. He took me in his arms and said, "We will all pray for her, and I am sure God will help us. He will know what to do."

I had heard that Mr. Kimdirian had come to this country to study the ministry. I thought he would make a very good one, but had wondered if he would still play the violin. I had pictured him many times standing at his pulpit, giving the sermon, and then picking up his violin to play during the offering. This seemed strange to me, but I had thought how lucky the congregation would be to have a minister and musician all in one.

When he just said, "God will know what to do," my hopes began to dwindle. Why didn't he say, "God will make her well again?"

I did not want to look at the clock. Mother had said she thought she might go about eleven o'clock. The clock on the piano in the living room began to strike. I felt sure it was not yet eleven o'clock. I was tempted to count, but at the same time I tried to miss the count. Tirzah and I were in the kitchen doing the dishes.

Mr. Kimdirian took the dish towel from my hands and said, "I'll dry them. You put them away. I think you should then both go to bed also. You must be very tired. I'll stay up until your father gets home."

"He may not come home tonight. I think he will stay there," Tirzah said.

"I hope he gets back to Middleboro..." I began. I could not finish what I was going to say.

"What do you mean, 'get back?'" Mr. Kimdirian asked.

Tirzah explained about Mother's friend who was dying and who wanted to see Papa before she died.

"The lot of a minister is not easy," he said, "and your father is a very fine one."

I wanted to ask him if it was true that he was going to be a minister, but I was too bashful and too many other thoughts were racing through my mind. Since Papa could not be home on this night, it was good to have Mr. Kimdirian with us.

There were two stairways leading upstairs. Generally I used the back stairway, but tonight I automatically went through the living room and up the front stairs. It was dark in the living room and as I ran through I surreptitiously looked at the clock. The street light shown on it dimly and it looked, I thought, a little after eleven.

I ran upstairs as fast as I could and knelt down to pray.

"Dear God, Dear God," I entreated. "Make her well and I'll do anything you say. I'll even be a missionary."

I had never thought of this occupation before, but it was a dedicated profession and I was sure God would approve of it. I had heard of many missionaries who could have stayed in their beloved America and lived a comfortable life, but they had gone to Turkey and been massacred there. Some of the American missionaries who had started out with us from Marash had frozen to death on the way. I could think of no greater sacrifice.

I repeated all the Bible verses I could that might give me hope. I did not dare open the Bible and at random point to a verse. I was afraid it might be "Not my will but Thine," for I could not bargain with Mother's life. I would say it if it were about my life, but I could not settle on that one for Mother's life.

Then I was afraid I might offend God for not trusting him. I was so confused. Then I thought I heard the telephone bell ring, but it was the clock. I heard it strike One. I felt so helpless. What else could I do? I had prayed and I was still praying. I could not go to sleep. The clock struck One again. "How could it be one o'clock again?" and wondered what time it really was. I wanted to go downstairs and look but I was afraid. I tried to pray again and I heard it strike One again. "It can't be three o'clock," I thought. There was too long an interval between each strike. I tried to occupy my mind between each strike with this slight distraction. Maybe it could make me fall asleep. Then I wondered what the difference was between death and sleep. Then I felt frightened and did not want to think about it anymore. I began to pray again, the sheet over my head.

The clock struck Two. Then I repeated "12:30, 1:00, 1:30, 2:00..." Why didn't I think of that before? The clock struck at every half hour.

I felt a little drowsy, but I was afraid to go to sleep. The beginning of another day might bring bad news, dreaded news. But it was already tomorrow. It was Two. The clock struck One again. Two-thirty.

Three. One again. Four. One again. After a while the street lights went out. It was good to feel drowsy. How much better it would be to be asleep, fast asleep, without thoughts, without fears. If God had only thought of a way one could press a button or something like a button to turn off one's thoughts. Like a button to turn off the electric lights. A button to black out one's thoughts and then press it on again when there was something pleasant to think about.

God could do everything. Why hadn't he thought of this? Why did he make finger nails and toe nails grow but not fingers and toes. Why did children have second teeth but not third ones, or fourth or fifth if anything happened to them? Why did God want to take away the Mother of young children?

The sun in my eyes awakened me. I sat up so abruptly that for a moment I felt dizzy. Then I remembered yesterday. And I was afraid of today.

I dressed hastily and ran downstairs. Mr. Kimdirian was helping Tirzah prepare breakfast. The others were still asleep.

"Did Papa call?" I asked.

"No, but don't worry," Mr. Kimdirian said, "I am sure everything is all right."

"I don't know if it is good news or bad news that he hasn't called," Tirzah said.

I heard footsteps upstairs. "I'll dress Ben Hur and bring him down for his breakfast," I said.

"Tell Cynthia and Nora to come too," Tirzah said.

Cynthia and Nora were fast asleep. I came down with Ben Hur.

"I didn't want to wake up Cynthia and Nora," I said. "They're still fast asleep."

"Yesterday was a strenuous day for them—for you all," Mr. Kimdirian said, "Let them sleep."

The ironing board and the basket of clothes were still as I had left them yesterday.

"I'll finish the ironing," I said, and was glad to have work to keep me busy.

The telephone bell rang. How ominously threatening it sounded. I ran to answer it. I stood tremulously, watching it, hearing it ring again, but afraid to answer it.

Tirzah and Mr. Kimdirian ran into the room. As if it was a brave deed that I must do, I lifted the receiver.

"Hello," I said.

Papa recognized my voice.

"Lydia, my girl," he began, "at 11:15 last night..." he sobbed.

I gave the phone to Mr. Kimdirian and covered my face with my hands.

"Of course I'll stay with the children," Mr. Kimdirian was saying. "Yes, it was best that you waited until morning to call. I'll make those calls for you. I know you will have many details to take care of. Come home as soon as you can. The children will need you."

Cynthia and Nora were now downstairs.

"She went peacefully at 11:15." Mr. Kimdirian choked, trying to comfort the children who now looked to him for comfort. He called us all to the living room. "I want to pray with you," he said and he prayed and wept with us.

For months and years I had prayed for Mother's life. What could I pray for now? That I had never prayed for before?

There was always something I had prayed for. When Papa had secretly gone to bring help and ammunition to help defend the Armenians of Marash. Each night during our exodus to find each member of the family. To bring Nora back to us when we thought she was lost. The terrible pain in my feet when they were cutting me without any anesthetic.

And then for Mother. To have Mother come home. And then to make Mother well again. To make Mother well. "Don't let her die, dear God, don't let her die." And now she had died. What can I pray for now? But now Mother can not tell me. I must think for myself. What can I pray for now?

Everyone was crying—Tirzah, Cynthia, Nora, Ben Hur, even Ben Hur. He seemed to understand. Even Mr. Kimdirian while he

was praying.

"What is he praying for?" I wondered? "For us," I thought. "To have God comfort us."

Then I thought of Mother in Heaven with God, and the more I thought the more confused I became. Then I thought about that word "faith" again. Mother had said we would always need to have it. When she goes, she had said, we will have one another to love and to protect, and to pray for.

Then I felt guilty that I had thought I could never pray again. What if anything happened to my sisters, or Ben Hur, or Papa?

"God, forgive me," I prayed, and I had so much to pray for. Mother had said we were lucky we had sisters. "How terrible it would be if I had no sisters and my mother was gone," I thought and shuddered. Yes, I still had something to be thankful for. I still could pray.

"Mr. Kimdirian made several telephone calls. I went back to finish the ironing. One iron even at times like this. A tear would fall on the hot iron, and the iron would hiss back. When the tears fell more abundantly, I would iron faster, and the falling tears would make the iron sizzle.

A playmate kept calling Nora to come out and play. When Nora did not run out like lightning as she generally did, the playmate came to the door, shouting, "Nora, Nora." Nora did not move.

"It is all right for you to go out and play," Mr. Kimdirian said.

"I don't want to," Nora cried.

Then the telephone bell rang—that telephone bell. Could I ever again not be frightened when it rings?

Mr. Kimdirian answered it. It was someone from the church.

"No, not here," he said over the phone. "In a funeral parlor."

Then I could contain myself no longer. I could not see the iron through the mist. Mr. Kimdirian took the iron away from me and began to do the ironing. I sat and wept and watched him press linen, and towels, and underwear, and I was not even embarrassed.

Mrs. Deah's son-in-law drove Papa home that evening. He had helped him make arrangements for the services. When Papa came in, he wept with us. It was the first time I had seen him cry. A new kind of sorrow hit my heart. I wondered which was worse, to lose a

mother or to lose one's husband or wife? Now my heart ached for Papa.

"Now I will pray for him," I promised.

"Cry, Badvelli, cry," Mr. Kimdirian said, using the honorific term for "Reverend." "It will help you to pour out the sorrows that have been buried in your heart all these years."

Mrs. Deah and a few other friends came in the evening and brought our supper. Mrs. Deah called Tirzah and me and asked us if we had suitable clothes for the funeral.

"Yes," Tirzah said, "Mother told us what to wear."

Mother had told us what NOT to wear.

"How smart Tirzah is to think of such a clever reply," I thought.

"Let me see them," Mrs. Deah said.

Tirzah left, and I wondered what she was going to get to show Mrs. Deah. But she had gone to bring Papa to her. Papa started to talk to her in Turkish, some of which I could still understand. Tirzah could understand it better, but Cynthia and Nora could not. When Papa started to speak Armenian, I knew that he did not want us to understand him at all. Whatever he said must have surprised Mrs. Deah. More guests were coming, so Papa excused himself and left saying, "That was her wish."

It was Mrs. Deekins and her husband at the door. This was the first time I had seen her with her husband.

"You poor children..." she began. That's how everyone began. Mrs. Deah joined her and told her Mother would not be brought to the house. Mrs. Deekins seemed shocked, too.

"And the girls are not going to wear black," Mrs. Deah added. I left the room.

It was Sunday, July 8. The services were to be held in Papa's Turkish-speaking church. A neighbor took Ben Hur, but the rest of us went to the services. It was a gloomy day, raining intermittently. The church was filled to capacity. Some people were standing. We sat in the front pew between Papa and Uncle Fred.

We had not seen Mother since the day we kissed her goodbye. Now she was right in front of us, sleeping peacefully, surrounded by beautiful flowers. The organ was playing "Lead Kindly Light."

The minister was speaking in English. He was from an American church. He had taken part in Papa's ordination. Someone was singing "Crossing the Bar," and "Some Day the Silver Cord will Break." My thoughts were mingled with the words I could hear from the pulpit.

"In My Father's house are Many Mansions...the mysterious Ways of God...God brought her and her Family to this new world... He in His Wisdom has willed that this Christian mother be the forerunner of her family into the heavenly world. This Christian mother and wife who with her family walked through the valleys of death and pain, and by the Grace of God came to this new world to teach her children how to live that they, too, may be ready for the final awakening...Death, the golden key that opens the palace of eternity. It is for God to choose who must go first ... Some day we will understand..."

I needed to understand now. Now the violin was playing-playing on the heart strings of those in the front pew.

It was raining outside. We were entering Mount Hope Cemetery. Why are cemeteries called "Hope?" Hope, the last thing that dies in man?

Tearless grief bleeds inwardly. I could weep no more, but as if Heaven wanted to cry for me, it began to pour. We left Mother at the "station" - going home- and Heaven seemed nearer.

THE END



